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THE TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY



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CHAPTER I.

THAT THE UNIVERSE HAD A CREATOR.

(A.) THE ORIGIN OF THE UNIVERSE.

Explanation of the universe, its origin, and a Free Force.

- (1.) The Philosophical Argument. If the universe had not an origin, it seems to necessitate that all events form a recurring series ; and this is incredible.
- (2.) The Scientific Argument. From the process of evolution and the dissipation of energy.

(B.) THE CREATOR OF THE UNIVERSE.

The Single Supernatural Cause, which originated it.

It is proposed in this Essay to consider the reasons for and against believing in the truth of Christianity, meaning by that term, as will be explained later on (Chapter XIII.), the doctrines contained in the Three Creeds. For convenience the subject has been divided into three Parts and twenty-four Chapters ; though Part II., on the Jewish Religion, may be omitted by anyone not specially interested in that subject. At present we are considering *Natural Religion* only, which deals with the great questions of the Existence of God, and the probability of His making some Revelation to man. And we will commence at the very beginning.

• (A.) THE ORIGIN OF THE UNIVERSE.

Now by the universe is meant the *material* universe,

which includes everything that exists (earth, sun, stars, and all they contain), with the exception of immaterial or spiritual beings, if there are any such. And by this universe having had an *origin* is meant that it was at some time acted on by a *Free Force*, that is to say, by a force which does not always act the same under the same circumstances, but which is able to act or not as it pleases. Of course such a force would be totally different from all the known forces of nature; but there is no difficulty in understanding what is meant by the term, since man himself seems to possess such a force in his own free will. We are not assuming that man's will is really free, but merely that the idea of a free force, able to act or not as it pleases, is well known to man and generally understood.

Hence the statement that the universe had an origin means that at some time or other it was acted on by such a Free Force; in other words, it has not existed eternally under the fixed and invariable forces of nature, and without any external interference. And we have now to consider the two arguments in favour of this, which may be conveniently called the Philosophical and the Scientific argument.

(I.) *The Philosophical Argument.*

By this is meant that, when we reflect on the subject, it seems inevitable that if the universe had not an origin, all present events must form part of a *recurring series*. The reason for thinking this is, that if all free force is excluded, it is plain that matter must be eternal, since its coming into existence at any time

could not have been a necessity, and must therefore have been due to some free force. And it is equally plain that what we call the forces of nature and the properties of matter must also be eternal, since any alteration in them at any time would also have required a free force. And from this it follows that no *new* event can happen *now*. For every event which the forces of nature could possibly bring about of themselves would, since they have been acting from eternity, have been brought about long ago. Therefore present events are not new, but must have occurred before, and thus form part of a recurring series.

This is no doubt a possible theory. For example, if we assume that the universe will in process of time work itself back into precisely the same condition in which it was long ago as a nebula or anything else, when it will recommence precisely the same changes as before, then, and only then, is it possible that it has been going on doing so from all eternity. But this theory, though possible, is certainly not credible. For it requires that all events, past, present, and future, have occurred, and will occur, an infinite number of times. And when applied to a single example, say the history of the human race, this is seen to be quite incredible.

We are hence driven to the other alternative, which is that the universe has not existed eternally under the fixed forces of nature, and without any external interference; in other words, that it had an origin. No doubt there are difficulties in regard to this theory also, but they do not seem to be nearly so great as

those in regard to the previous one, and are mostly due to our ignorance. We may not know, for instance, whether matter itself is eternal, or whether it began to exist in some manner inconceivable to us at the origin of the universe. Nor may we know how, on the former supposition, the free force acted, whether by causing matter to then assume its present properties, or by altering the conditions under which it was placed. Nor, again, may we have any idea as to why, if a free force once acted on the universe, it never apparently does so at present ; still less can we picture to ourselves what such a force would be like, though the difficulty here is no greater than that of picturing a force which is not free, say gravity.

But our ignorance about all this is no reason for doubting what we do know. And it appears to the writer that we do know that, unless present events form a recurring series, which seems incredible, the universe cannot have existed eternally without some *Free Force* having acted on it at some time. In short, it seems less difficult to believe that the universe had an origin than to believe that it had not.

(2.) *The Scientific Argument.*

And this conclusion is greatly strengthened by two scientific theories now generally accepted—that of the process of evolution and the dissipation of energy. The former seems to show that the universe had a beginning a certain number of years ago ; and the latter, that it will have an end a certain number of years hence. And either of these, if admitted, is sufficient to establish the point.

The first subject, that of *Evolution*, is discussed in the next chapter. All that need be said here is, that the atoms of the universe with their evolving properties cannot have existed eternally without any interference ; for then the course of evolution would have commenced in the eternal past, and would therefore have been finished now. But this is certainly not the case, and evolution is still in progress ; or at all events was so a few thousand years ago. And therefore, as a state of progress cannot be eternal, it must have had a commencement. And this commencement cannot have been a necessity, so it must have been due to a Free Force somewhere. In other words, evolution requires a previous *Evolver* ; it cannot start itself.

The other theory, that of the *Dissipation of Energy*, is that the universe seems to be progressing towards a uniform temperature ; for all energy tends to heat, and heat tends to equal distribution. And when this has been reached, it will be in a condition from which it cannot change itself again. We need not go into the proofs of this theory, as it is generally admitted, but will only point out that it is not in any way opposed to the other and equally well-established theory of the *Conservation of Energy*. For though the energy of the universe is conserved as to its total amount or quantity, it is yet dissipated or equalized as to what we may call its quality. The heat, for instance, which is now stored up in the sun will in process of time be distributed throughout space, and the same applies to the whole universe. Now let this complete dissipa-

tion of energy take any number of millions of years, they are yet nothing to eternity. And, therefore, if the universe with all its present forces existed from eternity, and without any external interference, it must have been reduced to this state long ago. So that if this theory is correct, it seems not only probable, but certain, that the universe had an origin.

But an objection has now to be considered. It may be said that the above reasoning is merely another form of the old argument, "Everything must have a cause, and therefore there must have been a First Cause;" the obvious answer to which is, that then the First Cause must also have had a cause, and so on indefinitely. But this is not the case; for the alleged First Cause is of a different *kind* from all the others. It is a *Free* Cause, whereas natural causes are not free, but are themselves effects of other natural causes; and these, again, of previous ones. What we want is a cause which is *not* also an effect, in other words, a cause which is not moved by anything else, but is moved by itself, or *Free*. When once we get to such a cause as this, there is no need for a previous one.

This objection, then, cannot be maintained, and we therefore decide that the universe had an origin. And all we know at present about the Force which originated it, is that it was a Free Force. And the conclusion at which we have arrived may be concisely expressed by saying, that before all natural causes which acted necessarily, there was a *First Cause* which acted voluntarily.

(B.) THE CREATOR OF THE UNIVERSE.

We have next to consider what further we can ascertain in regard to this First Cause. To begin with it can scarcely be disputed at the present day that the First Cause was a *Single* Cause, as modern science has completely established the unity which pervades the universe. We know for instance that the same materials are used throughout, many of the elements which exist on this earth being also found in the sun and stars. Then there is the force of gravity, which is all-embracing, and applies equally to the most distant stars, and to the most minute objects on this earth ; and there is also the luminiferous æther, which forms a kind of atmosphere, extending throughout the universe. Many other examples might be given ; but it is scarcely necessary, as everyone now admits that the universe (as the word implies) is one whole. And this plainly points to a *Single* First Cause.

Nor can it be disputed that this First Cause was *Supernatural*, which merely means that it differs from all natural forces in being *free* ; for this is exactly what we have shown. It was thus no kind of gravitation, no molecular attraction, no chemical affinity. All these and all similar forces would always act the same under the same conditions ; whereas the Force we are considering was of precisely an opposite character. It was a Free Force, a Force which voluntarily chose to originate the universe at a certain time. And describing this Force as Supernatural is merely to emphasize this striking difference from all natural forces.

In conclusion we will call this *Single Supernatural Cause* which originated the universe its *Creator*, and hence the proposition at the head of this chapter follows at once. And if it be objected that the universe may have had no *origin*, owing to some Free Force having been eternally acting on it, such a Force must also be Single and Supernatural, and therefore may equally well be called its Creator.

CHAPTER II.

THAT THE CREATOR DESIGNED THE UNIVERSE.

Design means originating combined with foreknowledge.

(A.) EVIDENCE OF DESIGN.

Seems overwhelming throughout organic nature ; and we are not appealing to it to show the Creator's existence, but merely His foreknowledge.

- (1.) The example of a watch : its marks of design show that it had a maker who foresaw its use.
- (2.) The example of an eye : this also has marks of design, and must also have had a Designer.
- (3.) The evidence cumulative : other marks of design.

(B.) THE EVOLUTION OBJECTION.

- (1.) The meaning of Evolution : it is a process, not a cause.
- (2.) The effect of Evolution on the present argument : it increases the evidence for design.

(C.) THE FREE WILL OBJECTION.

- (1.) Its great improbability : for several reasons.
- (2.) Free Will and Foreknowledge not incompatible ; so the chief argument in its favour cannot be maintained. Conclusion.

HAVING decided that the universe had a Creator, we have next to examine whether the Creator designed the universe. Now by *Design* is meant *originating combined with foreknowledge* ; so that any voluntary action, combined with foreknowledge of the results that will follow from such action, is to design those

results. In the case before us, we have already shown that the Creator did originate the universe. The question, then, that remains to be discussed is whether, when so doing, He foreknew the consequences of His action. If He did, it is equivalent to His designing those consequences, as the word is here used. And these include, directly or indirectly, the present state of the universe.

By the word *foreknowing* it is not meant that the Creator necessarily *thought* of all future events, however insignificant, such as the position of the leaves on each tree ; but merely that He was able to foresee any of them He wished, and in this sense foreknew them. Compare the converse case of memory : a man may be able to remember a thousand events in his life ; but they are not all before his mind's eye at the same time, and the insignificant ones may never be. In the same way the Creator may have been able to foresee all future events in the world's history without actually thinking about them. At all events, this is the kind of foresight, or rather foreknowledge, which is meant to be included in the term *design*.

(A.) EVIDENCE OF DESIGN.

Passing on now to the evidence of design, this is of the most varied kind, especially throughout organic nature, where we find countless objects, which seem to point to the foresight of the Cause which produced them. And it will be noticed that we are not appealing to these marks of design as showing the existence of the Creator, as is sometimes done, but merely His foreknowledge. His *existence* has been already estab-

lished, and also the fact that the universe was originated by Him. All we are now investigating is whether, when He originated it, He foreknew its future course ; and the apparent evidence in favour of this is overwhelming. Everywhere in nature, from the highest forms to the lowest, we meet with apparent marks of design. The evidence is indeed so vast that it is difficult to deal with it satisfactorily. Perhaps the best way will be to follow the well-known watch argument of Paley, and first show by the example of a watch what it is that constitutes marks of design ; next, how a single organ, say the human eye, possesses these marks ; and then, the cumulative nature of the evidence.

(1.) *The example of a watch.*

Now, when we examine a watch, we see that it bears marks of design, because the several parts are put together for a *purpose*. They are so formed and adjusted as to produce motion, and this motion is so regulated as to point out the hour of the day. While, if they had been differently shaped or differently arranged, either no motion at all would have been produced, or none which would have answered the same purpose. And from this, two inferences seem to follow at once. The first is that the watch must have had a *maker* somewhere and at some time ; and the second is that this maker understood its construction, and *designed* it for the purpose which it actually serves.

These conclusions, it will be noticed, would not be affected by the fact that we had never seen a watch made, never knew a man capable of making one, had

no idea how the work could be done, and could not even understand the whole of the mechanism. All this would only exalt our opinion of the unknown watchmaker's skill, but would raise no doubt in our minds either as to his existence or as to his having made the watch for the purpose it serves.

Nor would we feel the watch explained by being told that every part of it worked in strict accordance with natural laws, and could not possibly move otherwise than it did ; in fact, that there was no design to account for. We should feel that, though the action of every part might be in strict accordance with law, yet the fact that all these parts agreed in this one particular, that they all conduced to enable the watch to tell the time, did evidence design somewhere. In other words, we should feel that the properties of matter could only partly account for the watch, and that it required a skilful watchmaker as well, who utilised these properties so as to enable the watch to tell the time.

Now suppose that on further investigation we found the watch also possessed the marvellous and unexpected property of producing in the course of its movements another watch very like itself ; due perhaps to its containing a mould in which the new works were cast, and some machinery which fitted them together. What effect would this have on our former conclusions ? It would plainly increase our admiration for the watch, and our conviction of the skill of its unknown maker. If without this extra property the watch required a skilful maker, still more would it do so with it.

- And this conclusion would not be altered by the fact that very possibly the watch we were examining was itself produced from some previous one, and perhaps that from another. We should feel that, though each watch might be produced from the previous one, it was in no sense *designed* by it. And hence this would not in any way weaken our conviction as to the existence of a watchmaker somewhere and at some time who designed the whole series.

This, then, is the watch argument. Wherever we find marks of design, there must be a designer somewhere ; and this conclusion cannot be altered by any other considerations whatever. If, then, we find in nature any objects showing marks of design, the obvious inference is that they also must have had a designer. And this inference, it should be noticed, does not depend on any supposed *analogy* between the works of man and the works of nature. The example of the watch is merely given *as an example*, to show clearly what the design argument is ; but the argument itself would be just as sound if man never had made, and never could make, any object showing marks of design.

Moreover, to complete the example, we must assume that the *existence* of the watchmaker, and the fact of his having made the watch are already admitted for other reasons ; and that we are only appealing to these marks of design to show that when he made the watch he must have known that it would be able to tell the time, and presumably made it for that purpose.

And in this case the inference seems, if possible, to be still stronger.

(2.) *The example of an eye.*

We will now pass on to consider the *human eye* as an example of natural organs showing marks of design. It is a well-known instance, but none the worse on that account. Now it is necessary, in order to produce distinct vision, that an image or picture of the object should be formed at the back of the eye, that is, on the *retina* or expansion of the optic nerve, which communicates the impression to the brain. And the eye is an optical instrument for producing this picture, and in some respects very similar to a telescope. And its marks of design are abundant and overwhelming.

To begin with, in both the eye and the telescope the rays of light have to be *refracted*, so as to produce a distinct image. And the humours in the eye which effect this resemble the lenses of a telescope both in their curved shape, their position, and their power over the rays of light. Moreover, the *different* humours through which the rays pass correct what would otherwise be an imperfection in vision, caused by the rays being partly separated into different colours. The same difficulty had to be overcome in telescopes, and this does not seem to have been effected till it occurred to opticians to imitate in glasses made from different materials the effect of the different humours in the eye.¹

In the next place, the eye has to be suited to perceive,

¹ Encyc. Brit., 9th edit., vol. xxiii., p. 137.

• objects at different *distances*, varying from inches to miles. In telescopes this would be done either by putting in another lens, or by some focussing arrangement. How it is effected in the eye is not known for certain, but it plainly is effected, and with marvellous correctness. A landscape of several miles is brought within a space of half an inch in diameter. And yet the multitude of objects it contains, at least the larger ones, are all preserved, and can each be distinguished in its size, shape, colour, and position. And yet the same eye that can do this can read a book at the distance of a few inches.

Again, the eye has to be adapted to different *degrees of light*. This is effected by the *iris*, which is a kind of screen in the shape of a ring, capable of expanding or contracting so as to alter the size of the central hole or pupil, yet always retaining its circular form. Moreover, it is somehow or other self-adjusting; for if the light is too strong, the pupil at once contracts. It is needless to point out how useful such a contrivance would be in photography, and how much we should admire the skill of its inventor.

Again, the eye can perceive objects in different *directions*; for it is so constructed that it can turn with the greatest rapidity right or left, up or down, without moving the head. While in order to keep it *moist* and *clean*, both of which are essential to its utility, a special fluid is constantly supplied, the superfluous moisture passing through a hole in the bone to the nose, where it is evaporated. Moreover, this valuable instrument is provided *in duplicate*, the two eyes

being so adjusted that while each can see separately should the other get injured, they can, as a rule, see together with perfect harmony. Lastly, our admiration for the eye is still further increased when we remember that it was formed *before birth*. It was a *prospective* organ, of no use at the time when it was made; and this, when carefully considered, shows design more plainly than anything else.

Several more points regarding the eye might be mentioned, but the above are sufficient to show the general style of the evidence. The eye is, in fact, an optical instrument of great complexity and ingenuity; and the conclusion that it must have been made by someone, and that whoever made it must have known and designed its use, seems inevitable.

These conclusions, it will be noticed, like the similar ones in regard to the watch, are not affected by our ignorance on many points. We may have no idea as to how an eye can be made, nor even understand all its parts, and yet feel certain that, as the eye exists, it must have been made by someone, and that its maker designed it for the purpose it serves, and evidently knew far more about it than we do.

Nor do we feel the eye explained by being told that every part of it has been produced in strict accordance with natural laws, and could not have been otherwise; in fact, that there is no design to account for. No doubt every single part has been thus produced, and if it stood alone there might be little to account for. But it does not stand alone. All the various and complicated parts of the eye agree in this one remark-

able point, and in this one only, that they all conduce to enable man to see; and it is this that requires explanation. We feel that there must be some connection between the cause which brought all these parts together and the fact of man's seeing. In other words, the effect must have been designed.

Nor does the fact that organisms of each kind in nature succeed one another by generation alter this conclusion. Indeed, as was shown with reference to the watch, it can only increase our admiration for the skill which must have been expended on the first organism of each kind. Moreover, no part of the design can be attributed to the *parent*. In other words, if the eyes of a child show design, it is not due to the intelligence or designing power of its father and mother. *They* have not calculated the proper shape for the lenses, or the mechanism of the iris, and as a rule know nothing whatever about it. And the same applies to *their* parents, so that our going back ever so far in this way brings us no nearer to what we are in search of. The design is still unaccounted for, we still want a designer.

We hence conclude that the marks of design in the eye afford, at all events, a very strong *primâ facie* argument in favour of a *Designer*. And if only one eye existed in the universe, and there were no other marks of design in nature, this conclusion would be none the less clear.

(3.) *The evidence cumulative.*

• But the argument is far stronger than this. It is cumulative in a *triple* sense. To begin with, an eye is

found not in one man only, but in millions of men, each separately showing marks of design, and each separately requiring a designer.

Secondly, the human eye is only one example out of hundreds in the human body. The ear or the mouth would prove the conclusion equally well, and so would the lungs or the heart. And these various organs, it should be noticed, do not exist merely as individual organs, but as component parts of the human body, to which, as well as to each other, they are all adapted. And if a hundred independent organs showing design would require a designer, still more will they do so if, instead of being independent, they are thus adapted to one another. Moreover, the *mind* of man has to be accounted for, as well as his body ; and if the unforeseen action of atoms could not have produced a human body, with its wonderful marks of design, still less could they have produced a human mind able to know and argue about them. Indeed, in any case, it seems inconceivable that human intelligence could have been produced by what was itself unintelligent.

While, thirdly, human beings are but one out of many thousands of organisms in nature, all bearing equally the marks of design, and showing in some cases an even greater ingenuity than in the human eye.

Of course, as a rule, the lower organisms, being less complicated than the higher ones, have less striking marks of design, but their existence is equally clear ; the flowers of plants affording some well-known examples. And even where we cannot understand the

design, we can infer its existence ; as an acorn must be of a very ingenious structure to enable it to develop into an oak-tree. It should also be noticed that design is shown in the instincts of certain animals, and in the mutual relation between plants and animals ; the latter living upon organic matter ; which they cannot produce for themselves from earth, air, and water, but which they find ready for use in plants.

Nor is this all, for the world itself bears traces of having been designed. Had it been a mere chaos, we might have thought that the Creator was unaware of what would be the result of His action. But a planet like our earth, so admirably adapted for the support of life, can scarcely have been brought about by accident. It must have required *Wisdom* as well as *Power*, to produce it ; and this implies forethought and a *Forethinker*.

We hence conclude, on reviewing the whole subject, that various phenomena in nature, more especially organs like the eye, bear strong marks of having been *designed*. And then the Unity of Nature, and the fact that all its parts act and re-act on each other in innumerable ways, the eye for instance being useless without light, shows that if anything has been designed, everything has been designed. And the further conclusion that the Designer of the universe should be the same as its Creator is too plain to need insisting on. Now there are two, and only two, important objections to this argument, which may be conveniently called the *Evolution* and the *Free Will* objection.

(B.) THE EVOLUTION OBJECTION.

The first objection is that everything in nature has been brought about in accordance with fixed laws by the process of Evolution ; and therefore, though it is possible the Creator may have foreseen all present phenomena, yet the apparent marks of design in nature, being all the necessary and inevitable results of those laws, do not afford any evidence that He actually did so. And before discussing this objection we must first consider somewhat carefully what we mean by laws of nature and natural forces.

Now by a *law of nature* is meant an observed uniformity in nature. For example, it is called a law or rule of nature that (with certain exceptions) heat should expand bodies, which merely means that we know it does so. In other words, we observe that heat is followed by expansion, and we therefore assume that the one is the cause of the other. But calling it a law of nature for heat to expand bodies, does not in any way account for its doing so. And the same is true universally, so that a law of nature *explains* nothing, it is merely a summary of the facts to be explained.

It should also be noticed that a law of nature *effects* nothing. It has no coercive power whatever. The law of gravitation, for instance, has never moved a planet, any more than the rules of navigation have steered a ship. In each case it is some power or force acting according to law which does it. And *natural* forces are those which, as far as we know, *always* act according to some fixed law. They have no freedom of choice, they cannot act or not as they like ; they

must always and everywhere act the same under the same circumstances. We pass on now to the subject of Evolution, and we will first consider its meaning, and then its effect on the present argument.

(I.) *The meaning of Evolution.*

Now by the term Evolution is meant to be included the processes of Organic Evolution, Natural Selection, and Survival of the Fittest. The former may be described as meaning that all the varied forms of life now existing, or that ever have existed on this earth, are the descendants of earlier and less developed forms, and those again of yet simpler ones ; and so on, till we get back to the earliest form of life, whatever that may have been. And the theories of *Natural Selection* and *Survival of the Fittest* explain how this may have taken place. For among the slight modifications that would most likely occur in every organism, those, and those only, would be perpetuated which were of advantage to it in the struggle for existence. And these would in time, it is assumed, become hereditary in its descendants, and thus higher forms of life would be gradually produced. And the value of these theories is that they show how Organic Evolution may have taken place without involving any sudden change, such as a monkey giving birth to a man.

It will, of course, be noticed that Evolution is thus a *process*, and not a *cause*. It is the method in which certain changes have been brought about, and not the cause which brings them about. Every slight modification must have been caused somehow. When such modifications were caused, then Natural Selection

can explain how the useful ones alone were perpetuated, but it cannot explain how the modifications themselves arose. On the contrary, it supposes them as already existing, otherwise there would be nothing to select from. Natural Selection, then, rather weeds than plants. Among the various modifications in an organism, some good and some bad, it merely shows how the useless ones would disappear, and the useful ones alone would be perpetuated ; in other words, how the fittest would survive. But this survival of the fittest does not explain in the slightest degree how the fitness arose. If, as an extreme example, out of a hundred animals, fifty had eyes and fifty had not, it is easy to understand how those that had eyes would be more likely to perpetuate their species ; but this does not explain how they first got eyes. And the same applies in other cases.

How, then, did the variations in each organism first arise ? In common language they may be ascribed to chance, but, strictly speaking, such a thing is impossible. The word *chance* is merely a convenient term for the results of certain forces of nature when we are unable to calculate them. Chance, then, must be excluded ; and there seem to be only two alternatives to choose from. Either the organisms in nature possessed free will, and acted as they did *voluntarily*, or else they did not possess free will, and acted as they did *necessarily*. The former theory will be examined later on ; the latter is the one we are now considering. And it is plainly equivalent to all the organisms in nature, being mere machines, the future action of which was

settled the last time a free external Force (*i.e.*, the Creator) acted on them. And this on the evolution theory was not later than at the beginning of life. Since then, everything has been brought about by the ordinary forces of nature, or, assuming these as fixed, everything has been automatic and the necessary consequence of what went before.

(2.) *The effect of Evolution.*

Now, would this invalidate our previous conclusion that the Creator designed all the organs in nature, such as the eye, and hence presumably the whole of the universe? On the contrary, it confirms it. For to put it plainly, if all free will on the part of the organisms is excluded, as well as all interference from the Creator, or any other external Force, the earth and all it contains is like a huge mass of machinery. And however complicated its parts, and however much they may act or re-act on each other, and however long they may take in doing so, if in the end they produce an organ showing design, this must have been foreseen and intended by the Maker of the machinery. In the same way if a mass of machinery after working for a long time eventually turned out a watch, we should have no hesitation in saying that whoever made the machinery, and set it going, intended it to do so. And is the inference lessened, if it not only turned out a watch, but a watchmaker as well, and everything else that exists on this planet?

All then that evolution does is to show that as the whole of nature forms a long and continuous process, it cannot have been carried out piecemeal; and there-

fore, if the end has been foreseen at all, it must have been foreseen from the beginning. In other words, just as the Unity of Nature shows that if anything has been designed, everything has been designed ; so Evolution shows that if it has been designed at all, it has been designed *from the beginning*. And we must hence conclude that the organs in nature, such as the eye, which undoubtedly show design, were not designed separately or as *after-thoughts*, but were all included in one grand design from the very beginning. And this can only increase our admiration for the Designer. Thus evolution, even in its most extreme and automatic form, cannot get rid of a Designer. Still less can it do so, if (as is probable) it is not automatic at all ; but is due to the *continuous* action of the Creator, who is what is called *immanent* in nature, and directs every step.

It should be noticed, moreover, that some of the most striking marks of design cannot be explained by evolution at all, as, for instance, the human eye. It is quite clear that wishing to see or trying to see, even if blind animals were capable of either, would never give them eyes. But it may be said that some of the earlier and less developed organisms had only *rudimentary* eyes, which could not see, but which in their structure and position resembled seeing eyes, and which became such in their later descendants. And does not this show that the eye could not have been designed by the Creator, or He would have given animals perfect eyes at once ?

On the contrary, even if we admit that such eyes

were useless (and this is at least doubtful, as they may have been partly susceptible to light), the inference is still in favour of design. For there is nothing improbable in the Creator producing eyes, like the-rest of nature, in accordance with some fixed plan, and by this slow process of Evolution. But on any other theory a rudimentary eye is quite inexplicable, for it was of no possible use to its owner in the struggle for existence. It was rather a *prospective* organ, slowly evolved and perfected during many generations, without being of any use till nearly finished. And this, as before said, shows design more plainly than anything else. It seems clear, then, that uncontrolled Evolution—that is to say, Evolution merely by accidental variations, as they are called—and Survival of the Fittest, cannot account for the eye at all. In fact, it requires not only natural selection but *supernatural selection* to explain it satisfactorily.

But now suppose, for the sake of argument, that this were otherwise, and that the eye and all other organs had been produced merely by natural processes ; in the same way for instance that a human hand may have been evolved from a monkey's foot, merely by the monkey using it as a hand, and taking hold of things. Does this destroy the evidence for design ? Certainly not ; it only increases it. For to make a foot which should in the course of time become a hand, as the animal kept using it as such, would require far more design than to make a hand straight off, as we should say. And the same argument applies universally, so that if the present organs in nature

have all been evolved, from simpler ones, it increases the amount of design which must have been spent on those simpler ones to an extent which is practically infinite.

Thus Evolution necessarily implies a previous *Involution* ; for all forms of life must have been involved in the first form before they could be evolved from it ; so that creation by evolution is far more wonderful than creation by direct manufacture. And it seems to many to be a far nobler conception of the Creator that He should obtain all the results He desired by one grand system of evolution, rather than by creating each species separately. For then the *method* in which the results were obtained would be as marvellous, and show as much wisdom and foresight as the results themselves, and each would be on a par with the other. Evolution, then, seems to be the highest form of creation ; and so far from destroying Theism, it only destroys the difficulties of Theism, by showing that every single part of every single organism may have been *designed*, and yet in a manner worthy of an Infinite Being.

Nor is the argument affected if we carry back the process of evolution, and assume that the earliest form of life was itself evolved from some previous form of inanimate matter ; and this again from a simpler one, and so on till we get back to the original form of matter, whatever that may have been. For if the results as we now see them show design, then the deduction from this as to the existence, and still more, since this is admitted, as to the *foreknowledge*, of a Designer, is not weakened, but our ideas of His skill are

- greatly increased, if we believe that these results were already secured when our earth was merely a nebula.

(C) THE FREE WILL OBJECTION.

We have, lastly, to consider the other, and more important objection, that arising from *Free Will*. Why, it is urged, may not all organisms in nature have possessed free will within certain limits, and have voluntarily selected those forms which suited them best? For example, referring to the case of a watch, if telling the time were of any advantage to the watch itself, and if the spring, wheels, and hands possessed free will, then it might be thought that they had formed themselves into that arrangement which suited them best; and if so, the idea that the watchmaker foresaw and intended them to adopt this arrangement seems unnecessary.

Now, in the case before us, as the organs showing design in nature, such as the eye, always conduce to the welfare of their possessor, the objection is certainly credible, but, as we shall see, it is most improbable; while the chief argument in its favour cannot be maintained. It need scarcely be pointed out that we are not assuming that the organisms have free will, but merely admitting that they may have it. And if anyone denies this, the objection, as far as he is concerned, falls to the ground at once.

(1.) *Its great improbability.*

This is apparent for three reasons. In the first place, low down in the scale of nature, the free will of the organisms, if they have any, must be very limited. It is difficult, for instance, to imagine that plants and

trees have a free will at all resembling that of man ; and yet they bear unmistakable marks of design. Secondly, in higher organisms, which may perhaps have a free will capable of working towards a definite end, it is difficult to see why they should have developed organs, like the rudimentary eye, which were not for their own advantage, but for that of their remote descendants. And how, we may ask, did blind animals know anything about the value of sight or the proper means of obtaining it ? While, thirdly, even in those cases where free will seems strongest, as in man himself, there is no evidence that it can effect anything like what is required. Suppose, for instance, men wanted to have three eyes instead of two, can anyone suggest how they would set about obtaining the third ? And yet, if they have voluntarily given themselves two eyes, they should be able with sufficient time to give themselves three.

- For all these reasons, then, it is most improbable that the marks of design in nature are due to the organisms themselves rather than to their Creator. But there is one important argument on the other side, which, if it could be maintained, would be sufficient to outweigh all this improbability. It is, that some beings, such as man, do, as a matter of fact, possess a free will, and that man can and does alter his condition, to a slight extent, by using that free will. And therefore it is said it is impossible for the Creator to have foreknown what man's condition would be, because free will and foreknowledge are *necessarily* incompatible. But this latter point is disputed.

• (2.) *Free Will and Foreknowledge not incompatible.*

Now, although at first sight freedom of action seems inconsistent with any foreknowledge of what that action will be, yet on closer examination this will be found to be at least doubtful. For our own experience seems to show that in some cases, at all events, it is not in the nature of things impossible to foreknow how a free being will act.

For example, I myself may know how, under given external conditions, I will act to-morrow. Never being sure of these, I cannot be said to actually foreknow the event ; so that foreknowing with man is never more than foreguessing. But I may be quite sure how, *under given conditions*, I will act. For instance, I may know that, provided I keep in good health, provided I receive no news from anyone, provided, etc., I will go to my office some time to-morrow morning. And yet I feel equally sure that this foreknowledge of mine does not prevent the act when it comes from being quite free on my part. My knowing this evening what I shall do to-morrow does not oblige me to do it. My foreknowledge of the event does not bring the event about. It is in no sense its *cause*. The act when it comes is due to my own free will, I merely foreknow *what use I shall make of my freedom*. And these are probably the common feelings of mankind on the subject.

It seems, then, that my foreknowledge need not be inconsistent with my free will. And hence, if I tell someone else how I shall act, *his* foreknowledge would not be inconsistent with my free will. So that in some

cases, and with assumed external conditions, it does not seem impossible for a man to foreknow how another man will act, and yet without interfering with his freedom. In short, free will does not seem to be *necessarily* incompatible with the foreknowledge even of man, though it is always practically so, owing to man's imperfect knowledge of the surrounding circumstances. But the Creator knows, or may know, these circumstances fully, and therefore it must be still less incompatible with *His* foreknowledge.

And this is strongly confirmed when we reflect that the difficulty of knowing how a free being will act, however great in itself, seems as nothing compared with the difficulty of *creating* a free being. Apart from experience, we should probably pronounce this to be really impossible. And yet man has been created somehow. Is it then unlikely that the Being who was able to surmount the greater difficulty, and to create a free man, should also be able to surmount the lesser difficulty, and to foreknow how he would act? Moreover, if free will and foreknowledge are *always* and *necessarily* incompatible, then the Creator cannot have any foreknowledge of *His Own* acts, or else they are not free on His part; neither of which seems a probable alternative. We are not, of course, arguing from all this that He actually does foreknow how He will act Himself, or how a free man will act, but only that it is not in the nature of things impossible that He should do so; in other words, that free will and foreknowledge are not *necessarily* incompatible.

And this is precisely what we had to show. The

marks of design in nature afford what seems to be overwhelming evidence in favour of the foreknowledge of the Creator. The objection we are considering is that, in spite of all this evidence, we must still deny it, because some of the organisms in nature, such as man, possess a free will ; and therefore any foreknowledge is in the nature of things impossible. And the instant it is shown that such foreknowledge is not impossible, the objection falls to the ground.

We may now sum up the argument in this chapter. We first explained that by *Design* was meant originating combined with foreknowledge. We next considered the evidence for design in nature, choosing a single example, the human eye, on which to focus the argument. And this evidence appeared complete and overwhelming, more especially as we were not appealing to it to show the existence of a Creator, which is already admitted, but merely His foreknowledge. And we have since considered the two apparent objections to this argument arising from Evolution and Free Will. But when carefully examined, the former only strengthens the argument, while the latter does not invalidate it. We therefore conclude, on reviewing the whole subject, that the Creator *designed the universe*.

CHAPTER III.

THAT THEREFORE THE EXISTENCE OF GOD IS EXTREMELY PROBABLE.

(A.) MEANING OF THE TERM GOD.

The Personal Being who designed and originated the universe : some remarks on Personality.

(B.) TWO OF THE DIVINE ATTRIBUTES.

Wisdom and Power.

(C.) THE OBJECTION THAT GOD IS UNKNOWABLE.

This is partly true ; but everything is unknowable in its real nature, though in each case the partial knowledge we can obtain is all we require.

(D.) SUMMARY OF ARGUMENT.

(A.) MEANING OF THE TERM GOD.

WE decided in the last chapter that the Creator designed the universe ; in other words, that when He created it He foreknew its future history. Now any being who is able to design we will call a *personal being*. And GOD is the name given to the Personal Being who designed and created the universe. Hence the proposition at the head of this chapter follows at once.

Before, however, leaving the subject of *personality*, it should be noticed that the term when applied to man is commonly used in a much wider sense than is

here given to it, and includes various other attributes, such as self-consciousness (or being able to think about oneself), as well as the power of designing. Many writers indeed say it involves the three ideas of *thought*, *desire*, and *will*; but these seem to be all included in designing; for if I design anything, I must first of all *think* of it, then *wish* it, and then *accomplish* it. We will examine in the next chapter whether man is a personal being as we have defined the term; but two remarks may be made here.

The first is, that if we admit the personality of *man*, we have another and independent argument in favour of that of the Creator. For the Creator has somehow or other produced man, with all his attributes; and, therefore, He cannot be a mere impersonal Being or Force, for such a Being could have formed no idea of personality, much less have produced such a result in ourselves; so that if man is a personal being it follows that man's *Maker* must be so too.

Moreover, as we shall see, man's personality involves his having a mind and spirit, though we cannot discover them by any physical means. And this meets the objection that we cannot discover God by any physical means. It would be much more surprising if we could. But though the telescope can find no God in the heavens, just as the microscope can find no mind in man, the existence of each may be quite certain for other reasons. In popular language, all we can see is the *house*, not the *tenant*, in each case.

The second remark is that the idea of human personality introduces a great difficulty; indeed, many

consider it the greatest difficulty in regard to Theism ; we mean that of believing that the Creator is a Personal Being in any similar sense. For a human person, as generally understood, means an individual—someone with a separate existence, and this implies the existence of something else from which he is separated ; and it thus involves limitations of some kind. On the other hand, the Creator or First Cause of the universe seems to be Eternal, Omnipresent, and All-embracing.

There is an undoubted difficulty here, but it is probably due to our ignorance. Personality with man may imply limitations, but Personality with the Creator need not. In the same way, *seeing* with man implies an organ of sight ; but *seeing* with the Creator, or rather His unknown attribute, which is least inadequately expressed by that term, certainly does not. In short, a human idea when transferred to the Deity is necessarily incomplete and imperfect. And it may be added, that many who hesitate to ascribe Personality to the First Cause do so for this very reason, that the term is inadequate rather than incorrect. The choice, they say, is not between personality and something lower, but between personality and something higher¹ ; and the First Cause can be no more represented in terms of human consciousness, than this latter can be represented in terms of plant functions. Under these circumstances, we have thought it better to limit the meaning of personality to the idea of designing. And in this sense the evidence that the

¹ Herbert Spencer. First Principles, 4th Edition, 1880, p. 109.

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Creator of the Universe is a Personal Being is, as we have seen, overwhelming.

(B.) TWO OF THE DIVINE ATTRIBUTES.

We must next notice somewhat carefully two of God's attributes, *Wisdom* and *Power*. Both of these are necessarily involved in the idea of a Personal Being able to design. For *design*, as used in this Essay, means originating or freely doing anything, as well as previously planning it. And therefore, if we use the word, as is often done, for planning alone, we must remember that a personal being is one who can both design and accomplish. The former implies a mind able to form some plan, and the latter a free force, or will, able to carry it out. And, therefore, a personal being must of necessity have *wisdom* to design and *power* to accomplish. And considering the vastness of the universe and the complexity of its organisms, it seems only reasonable to conclude that the Creator possesses both of these attributes to the greatest possible extent, so that He is Omniscient and Omnipotent.

But it is important to notice the meaning given to these words. *Omniscience*, then, means possessing all possible knowledge. Now the only knowledge which might be thought impossible is how a free being would act in the future, and we have already shown that such knowledge is not in the nature of things impossible; so there does not seem to be any necessary restriction here.

But with *Omnipotence* the case is different. This means, as said above, possessing all possible power; that is to say, being able to do anything which is not

impossible. Of course some Christians may be inclined to answer that *with God all things are possible*¹; but as He who said so began one of His own prayers with the words *if it be possible*, this cannot be taken in its widest sense. And provided the word *impossible* is used in its strict meaning, we have no reason for thinking that God could do impossible things; such as make a triangle with the properties of a circle, or allow a man a free choice between two alternatives, and yet force him to choose one of them. These, then, are two of the great attributes of God, Wisdom and Power. There is a third, which will be considered in Chapter V.

It should also be noticed that besides being the Designer and Creator of the universe in the past, God seems to be also its *Maintainer* at the present, being, in fact, the Omnipresent Power which is still working throughout nature. That there is such a Power can scarcely be denied, and that it is the same as the Creating Power is plainly the most probable theory. God is thus the Cause of all natural forces now, just as He was their Creator in times past; and what are called secondary or natural causes, have probably no existence. They may, indeed, be called secondary *forces*, but they are not *causes* at all in the strict sense; for a cause must be *free*, it must have the power of initiative. Thus man's free will, if it is free, would be a real secondary cause, but the forces of nature are mere links in a chain of necessary events. This is often spoken of as the Divine *Immanence* in nature,

¹ Matt. 19. 26; 26. 39.

and means little else than the Omnipresence of a Personal God—the all-pervading influence of One “who is never so far off as even to be called near.”

And it may be pointed out that if God is thus omnipresent He must be *invisible*; since to be visible He would require some outline which we could *see*, and thus be in one place and not in another. And if He is immanent in nature, and all natural forces are the immediate effect of His Will, then as long as His Will remains the same, these forces will be invariable. And, therefore, their being so at present is no argument against the Theistic theory. It would be an argument against a capricious God, but not against One whose power is guided by wisdom, and directed for a definite purpose.

(C.) THE OBJECTION THAT GOD IS UNKNOWABLE.

We must lastly consider an important objection which may be made to the whole argument in these chapters. It may be said that the human mind is unable to argue about the *First Cause*, because we have no faculties for comprehending the Infinite; or, as it is commonly expressed, because God is *Unknowable*.

Now this objection is partly true. There is a sense in which all will admit that God is Unknowable. His existence and attributes are too great for any human mind to comprehend entirely, or for any human language to express completely and accurately. And, therefore, all our statements on the subject are at best only approximations to the truth. We can apprehend His existence, but we cannot comprehend it, and God alone knows fully what the term means. We

need have no hesitation, then, in admitting that God^o in His true nature is *Unknowable*.

But, strictly speaking, it is the same with everything. Man in his true nature is also unknowable, but yet we know something about man. So, again, the forces of nature are all unseen and unknowable in themselves, but yet from their effects we know something about them. And even matter when reduced to atoms, or electrons, or anything else, is still a mystery, and yet we know a good deal about matter. And in each case this knowledge is not unreal because it is incomplete. Why, then, should the fact of God being in His true nature unknowable prevent our having some real, though partial, knowledge of Him, and arranging that knowledge in scientific order? In short, we may know something about God, though we cannot know everything about Him.

And it should be noticed that Natural Theology and Natural Science are alike in this respect—they are both founded on inferences drawn from the observed facts of nature. For example, we observe the motion of falling bodies, and infer the existence of some force, gravity, to account for this. Similarly, we observe the marks of design throughout nature, and infer the existence, or at least foresight, of some Being who designed them. In neither case have we any direct knowledge as to the cause of the phenomena. And in some respects Theology is not so unknowable as Science. For our own, real or apparent, mind and free will do give us some kind of idea of the existence of a personal being apart from what he does ;

• whereas of a natural force, such as gravity, apart from its effects, we can form no conception whatever. Thus our knowledge of every subject is but partial, and it finally leads us into the Unknowable.

But now comes the important point. This partial knowledge, which is all we can obtain in either Science or Theology, is all we require. It is not a perfect knowledge, but it is sufficient for all practical purposes. Whatever the force of gravity may be in itself, we know what it is *to us*. We know that if we jump off a cliff we shall fall to the ground. And so in regard to Theology. Whatever God may be in Himself, we know what He is *to us*. We know that He is our Maker, and therefore, as will be shown in the next chapter, the Being to whom we are responsible. This is the practical knowledge which we require, and this is the knowledge which we can obtain.

Moreover, though our reason may be to some extent unfit to judge of such matters, the vast importance of the subject seems to demand our coming to some conclusion one way or the other. This is especially the case because important results affecting a man's daily life follow from deciding the question of God's existence in the affirmative, and to leave it undecided is practically to decide it in the negative. In the same way, if a ship were in danger of sinking, and a steamer also in distress offered to take off the passengers, for one of them to say that he had not sufficient means to determine whether it was safer to go in the steamer or not, and would therefore do nothing and stay where he was, would be practically the same as deciding not to

go in the steamer. So in the case before us. To refuse to decide the question owing to the alleged inadequacy of human reason is practically the same as to deny the existence of God.

Still, it may be urged, granting that our reason must decide the question one way or the other, and granting that our reason seems to force us to conclude in the existence of God, are there not great difficulties in honestly believing this conclusion? No doubt there are, and no thoughtful man would think of ignoring them. But after all it is only a choice of difficulties. If reason is to decide the question, our beliefs must move in the *line of least resistance*; and, as we have shown, there is less difficulty in believing each of the propositions here maintained than the contrary. It is less difficult, for instance, to believe that the universe had an origin than to believe that it had not. And this is the only kind of proof the subject admits of. We have not attempted to *demonstrate* the existence of God, or to show that this theory is free from difficulties; but we have shown that, with all its difficulties, it is still by far the most probable theory to explain the origin and present state of the universe. And we therefore decide, judging by reason alone (which is the line adopted in this Essay), that the existence of God is *extremely probable*.

(D.) SUMMARY OF ARGUMENT.

In conclusion, we will very briefly repeat the main line of argument thus far. To begin with, in the present universe we observe a succession of changes. If these changes are not recurring, which seems in-

credible, they must have had a commencement at some time ; and this is supported by the theories of Evolution and the Dissipation of Energy. And, therefore, as this commencement cannot have been a necessity, it must have been due to a *Free Force* somewhere. And a Free Force must be a *Supernatural* Force, since natural forces are not free, but always act according to some fixed law, while the unity of nature points to its being a *Single Supernatural Force*, which we called the Creator.

Next, it follows that the Creator must have fore-known the consequences of His own action, judging by the marks of design which they present. And this conclusion is shown to be not incompatible with either the process of evolution or the existence of free will in man or other beings. And hence He must have been a *Personal Being*, possessing both Wisdom to design and Power to accomplish.

Or the whole argument may be repeated in an even shorter form. The universe (in its present condition) has not existed always, it is therefore an *effect*, something that has been effected, or brought about somehow, and therefore like every effect, it must have had a *Cause*. And then since the effect shows a certain unity throughout, the Cause must have been One. Since the effect shows in some parts evidence of having been planned and arranged, the capacity for planning and arranging must have existed in the Cause. In other words, a universe showing marks of design is the effect, and nothing less than a Personal Being who designed it can be the Cause. And GQD is the name given to this Personal Being.

CHAPTER IV.

THAT MAN IS A FREE AND RESPONSIBLE BEING.

(A.) MAN'S MENTAL ATTRIBUTES.

Man possesses a mind as well as a body ; two objections, Idealism, scarcely ever held ; and Materialism, a possible theory, but it has enormous difficulties.

(B.) MAN'S MORAL ATTRIBUTES.

- (1.) Man possesses a will.
- (2.) And his acts are partly determined by his will.
- (3.) This will is a *free* will.
- (4.) Moreover, man knows that his will is free ; and this enables him to design, and makes him a personal being.
- (5.) And therefore man is *responsible* for his acts, that is, for how he uses his freedom.
- (6.) Man also possesses a moral sense ; which enables him to distinguish the quality of acts as right or wrong, and makes him a moral being.
- (7.) While, lastly, man has a conscience, or direct means of judging of this quality in some cases.

(C.) DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ANIMALS AND MEN.

There is a great mental difference, though probably only of degree ; and entire moral difference, since animals do not seem to possess a *known* freedom, and are hence not personal beings.

(D.) CONCLUSION.

Man consists of three parts ; his unique position.

HAVING decided on the Existence of God, which is the great truth of *Natural* Religion, the question

now arises whether, if nature can lead us so far, there is no means of getting further. No one will deny that further knowledge is desirable, both as to God, ourselves, and our future destiny ; and is there no means of obtaining it ? And this brings us to the subject of *Revealed Religion*, that is to say, of God's making some Revelation to man. And the probability of this will depend partly on the *character of man*—is he a being at all worthy of a revelation ; and partly on the *Character of God*—is He a Being at all likely to make a revelation ? The former question alone will be dealt with in this chapter, and we will consider man's *mental* and *moral* attributes separately. Nothing need be said about his bodily or *physical* characteristics, as they have no bearing on our present argument.

And it may be pointed out at starting, that as all science is based on observed facts, the science of Human Nature must be based on the observed facts of human nature, and not on any *a priori* reasoning as to what we think probable or the reverse. Moreover, in discussing human nature or anything else, we must of course argue from a perfect, and not from an imperfect, specimen. Savages and children are only imperfect specimens of humanity, and cannot be taken to represent the species.

(A.) MAN'S MENTAL ATTRIBUTES.

By these are meant man's thoughts and feelings, and that they are different from the matter composing his body seems self-evident. Matter has size, weight, colour, shape, and hardness. Mind has the absence

of all these. They have no conceivable meaning when applied to thoughts and feelings. And yet both mind and matter exist in man. We each feel conscious that we have something which *thinks*, and which we call mind ; as well as something which *moves*, and which we call matter (*i.e.*, our bodies), and that these are absolutely distinct from one another ; and are no more two names for one substance (the theory of *Monism*) than a circle and triangle are two names for one figure. And from the nature of the case this inward conviction, or human consciousness, is all we can appeal to. For mind, if it exists at all, being by hypothesis different from matter, must be immaterial, and cannot therefore be discovered in the laboratory or by any scientific process.

And it must be remembered we possess no higher certainties than these *inherent convictions*, which form the basis of all our knowledge. Even the propositions of Euclid are only deductions from some other of our inherent convictions, such as that the whole is greater than its part. But still the difficulty of understanding this compound nature in man, part mind and part body, has led many to adopt one or other of two opposite theories, Idealism or Materialism.

The former theory, that of *Idealism*, may be dismissed at once, as it is scarcely ever held at the present day. It means that man has ideas only, and that there is no such thing as matter ; the whole of our life being regarded as a mere dream. It is a consistent theory, but I have never met anyone who consistently maintained it.

The other theory, that of *Materialism*, is much more important. According to this there is no such thing as mind ; what we call thoughts and feelings being merely very complex motions of the molecules of the brain. Now, that the mind and brain are closely associated together none will deny, but it does not follow that they are identical. The brain may be merely the instrument of the mind through which it acts. And though, as far as we know, the mind can never act without the brain, it may certainly have a separate existence, and possibly, under different conditions, may be able to act separately. It is in fact just as easy to conceive of thought without a brain, as to conceive of thought with a brain. All we can say is, that within the range of our experience the two seem to be somehow connected together.

On the other hand, there are great difficulties in accepting *Materialism*. For thoughts and feelings must be either the peculiar property of such highly organized forms of matter as our brains, or else the common property of all matter. On the former hypothesis, the proposed explanation is no explanation at all. If water does not think or feel when it freezes, nor hydrogen when it burns, nor nitrogen when it combines with other elements, why should these and similar substances when united in a man have thoughts and feelings as well ? To assert that this is so is no *explanation* whatever.

On the latter hypothesis, thoughts and feelings must exist in all matter, only in a very diluted form ; so that the elements carbon, hydrogen, etc., do to

some extent think and feel, and so also does the table at which I am writing, and the pen and ink I am writing with. And then when matter assumes the complicated form of our brains, its thoughts and feelings become more clearly marked. This is no doubt a possible theory, but that is about all that can be said for it. There is no evidence whatever in its favour, and it is so difficult to believe as to be practically incredible.

Neither of these theories then can be accepted, and we must abide by our inherent conviction that we have a mind as well as a body. This is an ultimate fact in human nature ; and we are as certain of it as we are of anything, though like some other ultimate facts it has to be assumed, because it can be neither proved nor doubted.

One further remark may, however, be made in regard to Materialism. This theory, to be consistent, must deny not only that man has a mind, but that he has anything immaterial at all ; he must be matter in motion, and nothing else. But this is disproved by our *memory*, which convinces us that we are the same persons now as we were ten years ago. And yet we know that every particle of our bodies, including our brains, has changed in the interval. We must then have something immaterial which survives, in spite of everything material changing. And this is confirmed by our consciousness, for the sense of *sameness* (or *personal identity* as it is called), is another of our inherent convictions.

The case, it should be noticed, is not like that of

• a tree, which may be popularly said to be the same now as it was ten years ago, though every particle of it has changed in the interval ; for as far as we know, the tree has nothing which connects its present state with its former state, it has no memory of what happened to it then. We *have*, that is just the difference. We can remember now what happened to us ten years ago. And yet our bodies now do not contain a single atom or molecule which they did then. We must, therefore, have something else beside atoms and molecules ; in other words, something *immaterial*, and if so, there is an end of materialism in its only logical form.

(B.) MAN'S MORAL ATTRIBUTES.

We pass on now to man's moral attributes, which may be thus analysed.

(1.) *Man possesses a Will.*

In the first place man possesses what, in common language, is called a *will*. Strictly speaking, of course, the will is not anything independent of the man, which he *possesses*, as he might possess a dog ; it is the man himself *who wills*, or who possesses the power of willing. But the common language is so generally understood, that it will be used here. Now the chief reason for believing that man has a will is, of course, human consciousness. Man feels that he does possess a will which is distinct from his body and mind, though closely associated with both, and apparently to some extent controlling both. For example, I may resolve to raise my hand, and thereupon do it ; or I may resolve to think out a proposition in Euclid, and thereupon do it. In each case the will is felt to be something

distinct from the succeeding bodily or mental action ; so that arguing from human consciousness—and we have nothing else to argue from—man possesses a will as well as a body and mind.

(2.) *Man's acts are partly determined by his Will.*

In the next place, a man's acts (and also his thoughts) are often determined by his will. By this is meant that a man's will is able to move his limbs, so that, for instance, he can raise his hand when he wishes, and this gives him the power of determining his acts. It is not, of course, meant that a man's will can move his limbs directly ; his limbs are moved by his muscles, which are directed by his nerves, and these are excited by motions in the brain. All that the will can do is to give a particular direction to these motions, which, in conjunction with various other forces, brings about the observed result.

Now we have in favour of this action of the human will on the human body the universal experience of mankind, which is that a man can somehow or other move his limbs at pleasure. Indeed, the question whether a man can walk across the room when he wishes, seems to most persons to admit of a convincing answer : *solvitur ambulando*. But notwithstanding this, the action of will on matter seems so improbable, and so difficult to understand, that attempts have naturally been made to find some other explanation.

But no satisfactory one can be suggested. For my wishing to move my body, and my moving it, occur at or near the same time, so frequently and so universally, that there must be some connection between them.

And therefore either the wish caused the change in the brain (which led to moving my body) or else some change in the brain both caused me to move my body, and also to wish to do so. And one theory is about as inconceivable as the other. We cannot imagine how an immaterial wish can move molecules of matter, or how the movement of molecules of matter can produce an immaterial wish. The former, however, seems the less improbable, for two reasons.

The first is that the will generally *precedes* the act : e.g., I wish to raise my hand, and subsequently do it ; not I raise my hand first, and subsequently wish to do it. This alone is not conclusive ; for, as just said, moving the hand resulted from certain movements in the brain, and these may have been previous to the wish, and possibly produced it, but the presumption is plainly the other way.

The second is from the process of evolution. For if the will is only the effect of material action and never its cause, it is clear that all the material actions might have gone on just as well without there being any will at all. It would have been a useless *by-product*. But in this case it is almost certain that they would have done so, and that the will would never have been evolved ; since evolution cannot perpetuate and perfect what is useless, and a will that can never influence matter is from a material point of view quite useless. These arguments then support—what to most persons scarcely needs supporting—the *daily experience of mankind*, which is that a man's will can, somehow or other, move his limbs, and hence determine his acts.

(3.) *Man's Will is free.*

It must next be noticed that man's will is a *free* will, and this is a most important point. It is quite distinct from the previous question. Then we decided that a man's raising his hand, for instance, was the result of his wishing to do so. We have now to consider whether the wish was free on the man's part, or whether he could not help it; the latter view being called that of *Necessity* or *Determinism*, and meaning that a man's actions are necessarily determined and not free.

Of course, both the theories of Freedom and Determinism admit that a man's will is influenced by motives or reasons, and always acts in conformity with the strongest; in other words, that the prevailing motive prevails. But the difference between them lies in the ambiguity of this word *motive*. What are all the motives influencing the will? Are they only external, and such as are brought from without to bear upon the will; or are they partly internal, and such as the will may, but need not, evolve out of its own powers, or out of previously acquired materials? Moreover, is their strength of a uniform kind, so that they merely want combining, like physical forces, to yield a resultant? Or do they differ so widely that the will alone can decide as to what is their relative strength; whether, for instance, the motive to yield to some animal passion is stronger than that to sacrifice oneself for the good of others? The former view corresponds to the doctrine of Determinism, the latter to that of Free-Will.

Of course, in every case a man's birth, education, and

surroundings, that is to say his *heredity* and *environment*, will greatly influence his choice. These have been likened to a player's hand at whist, which he may *play* well or badly. So a man's free will may make the best or worst of his opportunities. The important point, however, is not what limits there are to the freedom of man's will, but is it free at all ?

Now, strange to say, though the freedom of the will appears self-evident to most men, and is taken for granted in all human affairs, no absolute proof can be given of it. Everything can be consistently explained on the opposite theory. For, however much a man may think his choice is free, it can always be said that he could not help deciding as he did. This is admitted. But, on the other hand, no proof can be suggested of the existence of free will which cannot be given. An absolute proof is, from the nature of the case, unattainable. We are thus obliged to judge by probability ; and there are two important arguments on each side.

Now the great argument in favour of free will is, of course, *human consciousness*. It is one of the most universal, and one of the most certain, convictions of mankind that he has free will. This conviction is forced upon him by his own daily experience. He feels, for instance, that he is free to raise his hand or not. And this conviction, resting as it does on the daily experience of the human race, cannot be upset by any mere *a priori* arguments showing that it is improbable, or that there are difficulties in understanding how a man's will can be free ; for in every case it is more

likely that the premises of such reasonings are wrong, rather than the consciousness of mankind.

And the argument is strengthened when we consider that man's *belief* in his freedom, which is undisputed, must have had both a cause and a purpose. And as to its *cause*, it is hard to see how, on the evolution theory, the belief in human freedom, if untrue, could ever have been evolved. For if man were only an automaton, no amount of *believing* that he was free could alter his condition in the slightest degree, and therefore the belief would be utterly useless, and yet it has been not only evolved, but perfected to such an extent that it now forms an inherent part of human nature. And as to its *purpose*, it is hard to see why God, Who has somehow or other created man, should have implanted in his nature an inherent conviction of falsehood ; indeed, to many this appears incredible. The argument, then, from human consciousness alone seems conclusive on the subject.

But, as a matter of fact, this argument is amply confirmed by *human experience*. For experience shows that a man's conduct is variable and quite unlike the uniformity which we find in chemistry and physics, where there is no free force, and everything is brought about in accordance with fixed laws. So that, for this reason alone, the existence of some free force in man to account for this variable conduct is not very unlikely. And if it be objected that human conduct, when considered as a whole, is not variable, since under the same circumstances most men will act in the same way, the inference against free will does not

follow. For there is nothing unlikely in most men choosing to act in the same way ; and this does not at all resemble the uniformity of inorganic nature, where particles of matter always and invariably act in the same way. These, then, are the two arguments in favour of free will—human consciousness, confirmed by human experience ; and no more powerful arguments can be imagined.

On the other hand, the great argument against human freedom is that it would be an *anomaly* in nature ; since natural forces always act in the same way, and any free force, able to act or not as it likes, is absolutely unknown. If, then, man possesses such a force, no matter how limited it may be, he is partly, at least, a *supernatural* being, not bound by fixed laws.

Now all this may be admitted, but what then ? Is it incredible that man should be a partly supernatural being ? Certainly not. For God, Who created man, is a Supernatural Being ; He possesses free will, and He might, if He thought fit, bestow some of this special attribute on man, allowing him, that is to say, within certain limits, and up to a certain extent, to act in one way or another. No doubt, to persons who study physical science alone, the existence of any free force in man seems most improbable. But, on the other hand, to those who study the actions of men, such as barristers, judges, or politicians, the idea that man is a mere automaton might seem equally improbable.

And does not the same principle apply in other cases ? If a man were to study inorganic chemistry alone,

living, say, on an island where vegetation was unknown, would not a tree be a complete anomaly to him ? And yet trees exist and have to be allowed for. Chemistry has, in consequence, to be divided into two parts, organic and inorganic, and rules regarding the former are admitted not to apply to the latter. This is plainly the scientific way of treating the subject ; and why should not the same method be adopted in regard to man ? He is found by consciousness and experience to have free will. This, then, must be admitted and allowed for. The forces we meet with in the universe have, in consequence, to be divided into two groups—those which are fixed, and those which are free ; the former including all the invariable forces of nature, and the latter the variable force which man possesses, and which is called his free will. This may be an anomaly, but the evidence for it is overwhelming.

Moreover, the anomaly is greatly lessened by the fact that man already occupies a very anomalous position. Claiming free will for *him* is not like claiming free will for some mineral or plant. He is anyhow a unique being, incomparably the highest and most important on this planet ; and that he should be partly supernatural as well is not so very unlikely after all.

While, lastly, we must remember that the whole idea of natural forces being invariable is only a deduction from our reasoning. And we know more about ourselves where we are conscious of freedom, than we do about the surrounding universe, where we infer this uniformity. Indeed, our own free will is the only

' force of which we have any direct knowledge, and the so-called forces of nature, such as gravity, are, strictly speaking, only assumptions which we make to account for observed facts. And, as we have already pointed out, even these forces seem to have originated in the Free Will of the Creator ; so that as far as we can judge, *volition* of some kind is the ultimate source of all force.

The other important argument against free will is that it would be inconsistent with the *Conservation of Energy*, since it is said any voluntary action would involve the creation of energy. But this is at least doubtful ; for the will might be free as to its actions, were it only able to control energy without producing it. And it could do this if it possessed the power of altering either the time or the direction of force. By altering the time is meant freely choosing the time when an act should take place ; deciding, for instance, whether to raise my hand now or a minute hence. And by altering the direction is meant deciding, for instance, whether to raise my right hand or my left. And if the will possessed either of these powers, a free being would be like a reservoir of latent force, which the will could transform into actual motion when and how it pleased. And thus the will would be free as to its actions, without creating any energy at all.

We must therefore conclude, on reviewing the whole subject, that man's will is free, since this alone agrees with the *consciousness* of mankind, and fully accounts for the *variability* of human conduct. While, on the other hand, though an *anomaly* in nature, it is not on

that account incredible ; nor is it inconsistent with the *conservation of energy*.

(4.) *Man knows that his Will is free.*

Having now decided that man's will is free, little need be said about the next point, which is that man *knows* that his will is free, since, as we have shown, this is the chief argument for admitting its freedom. There are, however, many other arguments for proving that man believes that he has free will, for it is shown by his acts. It is this known freedom which enables a man to set before him an end, and deliberately work towards it ; in other words, it enables him to *design*, and makes him a *personal being*, as the term is used in this Essay. And it is needless to point out that the evidence of human design is universal.

Again, human language affords a conclusive proof that man has always and everywhere believed himself to be free. For not only do such terms as *I will, I choose, I decide*, exist in all languages ; but these and similar expressions are so essential to conversation that it is even difficult for anyone to argue against free will without using terms which imply that he and his opponent are both free. Indeed if "I" stands for nothing more than a changing group of molecules, it is difficult to see how I can argue at all. However, we need not pursue this subject, since it is undisputed that man *believes* that he has free will.

(5.) *Man's responsibility for his acts.*

We next come to man's responsibility. By this is meant that a man is responsible for the way in which he uses his freedom ; and this seems to follow at once

' from his knowing that he is free. Moreover, it is amply confirmed by human consciousness, for a sense of responsibility seems to be among the inherent convictions of mankind. Of course, there may be exceptions to this as to most other rules ; but taking mankind as a whole, he certainly believes in his responsibility.

And he also believes that this responsibility is primarily to God, or to some other supernatural Being. No doubt he is also responsible to his fellow-men, more especially to those among whom he is living ; but a moment's reflection will show that this is not the primary idea. For man must in the first place be responsible to his Maker rather than to his fellow-men. In the same way a child is first of all responsible to his parents, and then, secondly and consequently, to his brothers and sisters. And, therefore, because God has made us, we are responsible to Him ; and because He has placed us among other men, and presumably wishes us to take some part in human society, we are in a lesser degree responsible to them also. So that the *brotherhood of man*, as it is called, naturally follows from the Fatherhood of God.

(6.) *Man's moral sense of right and wrong.*

Next, as to man's moral sense of right and wrong. Now it is undeniable that man has the remarkable faculty of distinguishing the *quality* of acts which are free, and regarding some as right and others as wrong, the latter being called *sins*. And it may be noticed in passing, that the existence of moral evil or sin seems to many to be an additional argument in favour

of man's freedom ; for otherwise God must be the sole author of man's misdeeds. Of course they would not in this case be really *sins*, for if man has no free will he is a mere machine, and can no more sin against God (or man either) than a watch can sin against its maker. Such a man might be imperfect, and so might a watch, but he could not be *wicked* ; and yet few will say that there are no wicked men in the world. Now we will call a being who is thus able to distinguish the quality of acts a *moral being*. Man is therefore a moral being, having this *moral sense*, as it is called, of distinguishing right from wrong.

It will perhaps make the meaning of this moral sense plainer if we compare it with one of man's other senses, say that of sight. The one, then, distinguishes right from wrong, just as the other distinguishes red from yellow, or green from blue. And as the fact of man's possessing the faculty of distinguishing colours is not disproved by one man thinking a colour blue which another thinks green, and some individuals here and there being colour-blind or having lost their eyesight ; nor, to give another example, is the fact of man's possessing a sense of taste disproved by one man thinking a taste nice, which another thinks nasty ; so the fact of man's possessing a moral sense is not disproved by one man thinking an act right which another thinks wrong, or possibly by individuals here and there not recognising any difference between right and wrong.

And it should be noticed, this sense of right and wrong is quite distinct from the pleasant or unpleasant

“consequences which are associated with certain acts. For instance, I may avoid putting my hand into hot water, because I remember having done so before, and that it was painful ; but this is quite different from avoiding an act because it is wrong. It is also quite distinct from expediency, or the idea of benefiting by an act. For an act may not benefit us at all, or may even injure us, and yet it may be right. In short, “ fifty experiences of what is pleasant or what is profitable do not, and cannot, make one conviction of what is right ;” the ideas differ in kind, and not merely in degree.

Nor is man's moral sense to be depreciated, or considered untrustworthy, because it had, or may have had, a very humble origin in times past. For if so man's reason must be depreciated too on the same account ; and if human reason is not to be trusted there is an end of all science.

(7.) *Man's conscience.*

Lastly, as to man's conscience. This is often confused with his moral sense, but the two are quite distinct, as a little reflection will show. For a man might possess a moral sense, and be able to classify acts as right or wrong, and yet have no direct means of knowing to which class any particular act belonged. He might have to work this out by reasoning ; and in difficult cases we sometimes do so. But as a rule this is unnecessary. For mankind possesses a very remarkable *something*, called a conscience, which tells him intuitively, and without either argument or reasoning, that certain acts are right and others

wrong. Conscience is thus like an organ of the moral sense, and may be compared to the eye or organ of sight ; for just as the eye perceives that certain colours are red and others blue, so the conscience perceives that certain acts are right and others wrong. In each case the perception is almost instantaneous, and quite distinct from a deduction from reasoning. Conscience, it will be noticed, does not *make* the act right or wrong, any more than the eye makes the colour red or blue ; it merely tells us what acts are right and what wrong.

Now that mankind as a species possesses a conscience is indisputable. It is shared alike by young and old, rich and poor, educated and uneducated. It has existed in all ages, countries, and races. We all have it ; and what is very remarkable it seems to be independent of our will, and not at our disposal. We do not correct it, but it corrects us ; for it not only tells us what acts are right and what wrong, but approves definitely of our doing the former, and disapproves just as definitely of our doing the latter. Indeed, one of the most striking effects of conscience is this feeling of *remorse* or self-condemnation after wrong-doing. And such a feeling is practically universal. And it is, of course, an additional argument (if such were needed) in favour of man's free will ; for if a man's conduct is not free, why should he feel sorry for acting as he did ?

These, then, are the moral attributes of the human race, and it follows at once that man is a *free and responsible being*. But as this conclusion is often dis-

puted, because of the similarity between animals and men, and the difficulty of admitting that they also are free and responsible beings, or else of showing wherein the distinction lies, we must examine this subject.

(C.) DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ANIMALS AND MEN.

Now the *bodily* difference between certain animals and men is admittedly small ; and if, as many think probable, both were evolved from some common ancestor, it is plainly unessential. And though the accompanying *mental* difference is enormous, it is probably only one of degree, for the higher animals appear to possess the rudiments of a mind. So we must pass on to the *moral* attributes of animals. Unfortunately our knowledge here must always be imperfect ; for unless some discoveries are made in the language of animals, we can know nothing of their consciousness, which is the basis of argument in regard to man ; and therefore we cannot say (referring to the first three points) whether they have a free will or not. Of course, if they have *not*, the objection falls to the ground at once, as this would be a clear distinction between animals and men. But we have no right to assume this, and there is a good deal to be said on the other side, at least in regard to the higher animals, so the subject had better be left an open one.

But with regard to the next point, that of *known* freedom, we are on surer ground, for not only is there no reason, except of course human analogy, for thinking that animals possess this, but there are strong reasons for thinking they do not. For the proof of

man's *believing* himself to be free does not depend¹ solely on his consciousness. It is shown by his acts, as it enables him to *design*—i.e., to work towards a foreseen end—and there is nothing corresponding to this in animals. For though many of their works undoubtedly show design somewhere, it does not seem to be due to *them*. This kind of unconscious designing is called *instinct*, and there are four reasons for thinking that it differs from real design implying forethought.

The first is, that it is by no means strongest in the most intelligent animals, such as monkeys, horses, and dogs. On the contrary, this kind of designing seems to decrease in the scale of animal life, just as real intelligence increases. And this is very remarkable, and of itself suggests that there must be some difference between the two.

The next is, that animals are only able to design in a few special cases. A bird, for example, will construct her nest admirably, but she does not seem able to construct anything else. In the same way, a bee will build its hive on the most perfect mathematical principles, the three rhombs, which close the hexagonal prisms, having the exact angles so as to contain the greatest space with the least material.¹ But it cannot apply its mathematics to anything else. Similarly, a spider and its web, and many other instances, might be given. This makes it probable that such works are due to some special and particular cause, which is called instinct, and do not result from

¹ Encyc. Brit., 9th edit., vol. iii., p. 490. The angles are $109^{\circ} 28'$ and $70^{\circ} 32'$.

• the animal's possessing a known freedom of action, which would enable it to design equally well in other cases.

And thirdly, this is confirmed by the fact that, if these works resulted from the design of the animals themselves, they must possess intellectual powers of a very high order. But this is quite untenable, since in other respects they act with the greatest stupidity. A bee, for instance, with all its mathematics, cannot very often, if it has flown in through an open window, retrace its way, but will buzz helplessly against another which is shut. Moreover, the instincts of animals are the same all over the world, and not more advanced in some countries than in others, as would probably be the case if they were due to reasoning.

And fourthly, even in these few cases there is no gradual improvement in what the animal does. The last cell built by a bee is no better than the first, and no better, as far as we know, than cells built by bees thousands of years ago. The bee gains nothing by experience ; it never makes an alteration by way of improvement on what it did before ; whereas man, in consequence of his known freedom, is always trying to improve upon his previous works. Animals are thus like producers, who work by a rule given to them, and not like creators, who design for themselves, and profit by their previous experience ; and the young of animals without any experience whatever have the same instincts as the old. Plainly, then, an animal's instinct is born with it, and not acquired ; and therefore, any apparent design there may be in what is done

by instinct cannot be attributed to the animal itself, any more than the design shown in its eyes and other organs, but to its Maker.

But it may be urged that in some of the higher animals, especially those in contact with man, we find certain acts which do seem to imply forethought and design. A dog, for example, will bury a bone one day and go and look for it the next. But when once it is admitted that what are apparently far more striking instances of design are to be explained by instinct, it seems more probable that these are to be explained in the same way.

And this is confirmed by the fact that animals do not appear to have any idea of *responsibility*, or any sense of *right* and *wrong*, which in man are the result of his known freedom. Of course, it may be said that as we punish a dog for doing what we dislike, it implies that we hold him responsible for the act. But this does not follow. The punishment may only appeal to the dog's association of ideas. The dog, like other animals, has a natural impulse to avoid pain, and therefore it avoids the act which its memory associates with pain without necessarily feeling responsible for it, or considering it to be wrong; while in the vast majority of cases we never think of holding an animal responsible for its acts, or look upon its injuring anyone as a sin. We conclude, then, that *moral* attributes form the great distinction between animals and men; because though animals have, or may have, a free will, it is not a *known* freedom, and therefore they are not able, like men, to *design*, and are hence not *personal beings*.

Two further remarks may be made before leaving this subject. The first is, that though there are difficulties in placing this known freedom as the difference between animals and men, there are as great, if not greater, difficulties in placing it anywhere else. If we say that an ape or a dog can design, the difficulty is not lessened ; it is merely transferred lower down the scale. Can a jellyfish design ? and if so, can an oak or a seaweed ? The momentous attribute of known freedom, unless it is common to all life, which is most improbable, must begin *somewhere* ; and it seems less difficult to place it between animals and men than anywhere else.

The second and more important point is, that our ignorance about animals is no reason for doubting what we do know about man. To do this would be most illogical. Indeed, we might as well deny that a man could see, or hear, or remember, because there are difficulties in deciding where sight and hearing and memory commence in the scale of animal life.

(D.) CONCLUSION.

We may now conclude this chapter. With regard to man, it is clear that his bodily, mental, and moral attributes are quite distinct. A man may be strong in body, and yet of weak intellectual power ; or, again, a man may have a great intellect, and yet be of weak moral character. This makes it probable that human nature consists of three parts—*body*, *mind*, and *spirit* ; the mind corresponding to the mental reasoning part of man, and the spirit to the free moral part. And as a man's body and mind are both (to some

extent) under the control of his free will, or spirit, this latter must be looked upon as his real *self*. Thus he is not strictly speaking an organism at all, but a free being served by organs both of body and mind. They are *his* ; they do not constitute *him*. He is the personal being, the free spirit conscious of its freedom, which controls both.

And our present conclusion is quite plain. We have shown that man is a *free* being, his freedom distinguishing him from all natural forces, and making him in part supernatural. And he is a *responsible* being, his responsibility being due to his known freedom, and distinguishing him from all animals. He has thus a unique position. Nothing else on this planet resembles him, and in his attribute of known freedom which enables him to design, and therefore makes him a *personal being*, he resembles God alone.

CHAPTER V.

THAT GOD TAKES AN INTEREST IN MAN'S WELFARE.

(A.) THE EVIDENCE IN ITS FAVOUR.

Since God is a *Moral* as well as a Personal Being, He must be capable of caring for all His creatures ; and He probably would do so, especially for man ; while the marks of beneficent design seem to prove the point. But there are two great difficulties.

(B.) THE INSIGNIFICANCE OF MAN.

- (1.) Some counter-arguments, showing that if insignificant, God may still care for him.
- (2.) Man's real importance.
- (3.) The supposed inhabitants of other planets.

(C.) THE EXISTENCE OF EVIL.

- (1.) Physical evil in animals. The objection that it is vast in amount, wholly unmerited, and perfectly useless, cannot be maintained.
- (2.) Physical evil in man. Several ways of lessening the difficulty. Its explanation seems to be that God's designing evil does not mean His desiring it, as it is essential for forming a man's character.
- (3.) Moral evil in man. Also designed but not desired, as it is essential to free will ; and wicked men are as necessary as any other form of evil.

(D.) CONCLUSION.

God's *Goodness* includes both Beneficence and Righteousness.

HAVING discussed in the last chapter the character of man, we have next to consider, as far as we have any

means of doing so, *the Character of God* ; more especially whether He seems to take any interest in man's welfare. And we will first examine the evidence in favour of this ; then the two great arguments on the other side from the apparent insignificance of man, and the existence of evil ; and will conclude by considering in what sense the term *Goodness* can be ascribed to God.

(A.) THE EVIDENCE IN ITS FAVOUR.

To begin with, God is certainly capable of taking an interest in man's welfare, for He is not only a Personal Being, but also a Moral Being. This follows at once from what may be called the *moral argument* for the Existence of God, or that depending on man's free will. It is briefly this, that no combination of natural forces, which are uniform and always act the same under the same circumstances, can ever produce a *free* force, able to act or not as it likes. The idea seems inconceivable. If, then, man possesses such a force, which we have already admitted, it cannot have been derived from any natural forces, nor can it have made itself, so it must have come from some previous free force, and this, again, from a previous one, and so on till we finally arrive at an eternally existing *Free Force*. And this, it will be remembered, was precisely the conclusion we reached in Chapter I., though from quite a different argument.

Having admitted this, the next step is that this Free Force, or Free Being, must be conscious of His Freedom, and must therefore be a *moral* Being, able to distinguish the quality of acts as right or wrong. Indeed, the mere fact that man possesses this re-

' markable faculty makes it certain that man's Maker must do the same. For this faculty differs in kind from all physical and mental faculties, and cannot therefore have been evolved from them alone. In other words, physical and mental forces can never by any possible combination produce out of themselves that which was never in them—the idea of right and wrong. So that a moral man implies a moral God.

And this is amply confirmed by our *conscience*, which, as before said, tells us that certain acts are right and others wrong, though it does not *make* them right or wrong. It is thus only an *intermediary* between Someone else and ourselves; and this Someone else can only be God, Who gave us our conscience, so that in popular language it may be called *the Voice of God*. And it tells us we ought to act right, because this is the way in which God wishes us to act. But if so, it follows again that He must be a Moral Being capable of distinguishing the quality of acts.

Now a personal and moral God must certainly be able to take an interest in the welfare of His creatures; and, as we shall see, it is not only probable that He would do so, but there is abundant evidence that this is actually the case.

In the first place, it is distinctly probable that God would care for all the beings whom He has created; or why should He have created them? And the probability that He would care for *man*, who, like Himself, is a personal and moral being, and whom He has thus endowed with some of His own attributes, is of course much greater. Moreover, we have no

knowledge scientifically of any other being in the universe who is either personal or moral ; so that though man may be quite unworthy of God's care, we know of no other being who is more worthy of it. And it is scarcely likely that a Creator would not take an interest in *any* of His works.

And this *a priori* argument is confirmed by observation. For everywhere in nature, and especially in man, we meet with marks, not only of design, but of *beneficent* design—that is, of design tending to the welfare and happiness of the beings in question. Take for instance the human eye, which we considered in Chapter II. As there shown, all its various and complicated parts agree in this one particular, that they all conduce to enable man to see. And the inference from this, that God, Who somehow or other brought all these parts together did so with the intention of enabling man to see, seems irresistible. And the further conclusion that God's object in thus enabling man to see, or at least the chief object, was to conduce to his welfare, is equally obvious. And the same applies to thousands of other organs throughout nature.

But there are two slight objections. The first is, that the human eye has some defects, in being liable to various kinds of disease and accident ; and this is of course true. But these defects are incidental to the construction of the eye and not the object of its construction. The eye was made to see and not to ache. That it does ache now and then is in all probability due to its being such a complicated

instrument, and therefore it scarcely affects the argument.

The other objection is, that beneficial organs like the eye, though they abound throughout nature, are not the only ones we meet with. There are others, like the claws and teeth of wild animals, which are just the opposite, and seem designed to give pain to other creatures. But this is quite untenable. They were plainly designed to enable the animal to secure its food, and are perhaps necessary for that purpose, and they all tend to the welfare of their possessor. There is, in fact, not a single organ in nature the *object* of which is to produce pain. Where pain is produced it is merely a sort of *by-product*. Neither of these objections then can be maintained.

(B.) THE INSIGNIFICANCE OF MAN.

But now to consider the other side. There are two chief difficulties; the first being from the apparent *insignificance* of man. For though he is doubtless by far the most important being on this planet, and endowed with some of the divine attributes, yet, after all, how utterly insignificant he is in comparison with his Maker. This is no new difficulty,¹ but modern science has increased its force by showing that our earth is but one member of the solar system, which again is itself a mere unit in the universe of stars. And, we may ask, is it likely that the God Who rules these millions of stars should take any interest in the beings on a small planet like our earth? This is the difficulty we have to face; and we will first consider

¹ Ps. 8. 3, 4.

some counter-arguments, then man's real importance and lastly the question of other planets being inhabited.

(I.) *Some Counter-arguments.*

To begin with, though it seems unlikely that God should take any interest in such insignificant beings as us men, it also seems unlikely that He should ever have designed and created such beings? And yet He has done so. And having created them, there is at most only a slight *additional* improbability, if any at all, that He should take an interest in their welfare. Thus, "*His interest in the beginning is the pledge of His interest to the end*"; and having once created the human race, it is unlikely that He should cease to care for it.

Moreover, lack of interest in His creatures, however insignificant they may be, is scarcely a worthy attribute to ascribe to God; least of all to the God of nature. For all through nature we find nothing resembling a neglect of small things. On the contrary, everything, down to the minutest insect, seems finished with as much perfection as if it alone existed in the universe. True greatness does not consist in despising that which is small; and it may be a very part of God's infinite greatness that nothing should be too small for Him to care about, just as nothing is too large. And while a Being, Who can govern the universe, and attend to its millions of stars, is no doubt great—inconceivably great; yet He is surely greater still—inconceivably greater—if He can *also* attend to our tiny planet, and its inhabitants; and

can do this so thoroughly, as not only to take an interest in the human race, but in the welfare of each one of its members.

And the whole analogy of nature is in favour of His doing so ; for the forces of nature never deal with matter in bulk, but with each particle separately. A stone, for instance, is attracted to the ground, because, and only because, each particle of it is so attracted. In the same way if God takes an interest in the human race (and, as just said, it is hard to imagine His not doing so), it may be because, and only because, He takes an interest in each individual member of it.

Moreover, whether we are insignificant or not, we are each of us *unique*. We are not like particles of matter. Millions of these are exactly alike, but no two *men* are exactly alike ; not even to the same extent as plants and animals. For each man is a separate spirit, a *personal being* distinct from all else in the world. And therefore, as we have each something special about us, God may take a *special* interest in each of us. Doubtless such an idea seems very wonderful ; but no one who has any knowledge of the marvels of nature will think it, on that account, incredible.

And then as to the discoveries of science, there is here also a good deal to be said on the other side. For though the telescope has shown us that our world is like a mere drop in the ocean, the microscope has shown us a new world in each drop ; and the *infinitely little*, as it is called, is as wonderful as the infinitely great, and man still occupies a sort of central position.

When, for instance, we examine a single part of a single organ, say the *iris* of the human eye, we find that it consists of a multitude of details, each of which is seen to be more and more complex the more we are able to magnify it, and so on without apparently any limit. And all this makes it more than ever likely that the God, Who has shown such marvellous skill in the formation of the various organs of a man's body, should care for the man himself, the personal and moral being, who is the possessor of these organs. Nor is the argument weakened by the fact that the organs of animals and plants also show a wonderful amount of design, for as far as we know, in their case, there is no personal and moral being to care about.

Again, science has not only shown us the *magnitude* of the universe, and that there are millions of stars, millions of miles apart, but it has also shown us its *unity*, and that all its parts are closely connected together. And certainly the idea that the God, Who rules these stars, should take an interest in us men, is no harder to believe than that the gases, which are burning in these stars, should influence our spectroscopes. And yet they do ; so that if this were all, it would still lessen the difficulty a good deal.

(2.) *Man's real importance.*

But this is not all, for science has also taught us a great deal about man himself, and his long development ; and this has of course a most important bearing on the argument. Indeed, it is scarcely too much to say, that the theory of *Evolution* has reversed the position altogether, and shown that so far from being

insignificant, man is in reality a being of the greatest importance. For we now know that our earth has existed for thousands of centuries, gradually evolving higher and higher forms of life, and all leading up to *man*, who is the heir of all the ages, the inheritor of those thousands of useful adaptations which have been perfected by his long line of ancestors.

And what is very important, organic evolution seems obliged to stop here. Man is not merely a link in a series leading on to still more perfect beings, but he is the *end* of the series. In all probability there will never be a higher being on the earth, for the causes which produced his evolution thus far have now ceased to act, and can carry it no further. When, for instance, man discovered the use of tools, there was an end to any further evolution of the hand. When he took to wearing clothes, there was an end to the body becoming hardier and stronger through exposure. When he took to using weapons and inventing machinery, mere physical strength was no longer essential, and could no longer be increased.

In short, when Evolution began to take a *mental* turn, there was an end to bodily development. Henceforth there was to be no evolution of any higher species, but the gradual perfecting of this one species by mental and moral, and not physical improvements. Man is thus not only the highest being that ever has been evolved, but, as far as we can judge, the highest being that ever will be evolved on this earth. So that the vast scheme of evolution, inconceivable alike in magnitude, in duration, and in complexity, is seen to

be one plan, with *man* apparently at the end of it. And therefore, of course, as everything was designed by God, he must have been the foreknown and intended end, from the very beginning ; the first thought in creation, as well as the last.

And when we thus regard man as the goal towards which nature has all along tended, and as the *chief* object which God—the Author of nature—had in view all the time, it seems to increase his importance ten-fold ; and shows conclusively that in God's sight he must be anything but insignificant.

Nor is it difficult to suggest a reason for this. For man, as before said, has a *mind*, as well as a body ; and though the discoveries of science have in some respects depreciated his *body*, by showing its evolution from other animals, they have at the same time magnified his *mind*, for it is his mind that has discovered them. And every fresh discovery man makes can only exalt him still higher for making it ; so that the mind of man now shows him to be a far nobler being than could possibly have been imagined some centuries ago. And certainly a mind that can discover the motions of distant stars, and the elements of which they are composed, cannot be thought insignificant. And if we believe that a man's mind, like his body, has been slowly evolved through countless ages, it seems to still further increase its importance.

Moreover, man has not only a mind, but also a *spirit*, or *free will*, able to act right or wrong ; and perhaps (if we were unfortunately not so far from it ourselves) we should see that *moral* perfection, always

acting right though one might act wrong, is as much above mental greatness, as this latter is above mere physical strength. But though *we* cannot properly appreciate it, God can. He is Himself a Spirit, and therefore, in His sight, a child possessing a mind and spirit, and thus made to some extent in His own image, and capable of developing moral perfection, may be of more value (because more like Himself) than a universe of dead matter. And if so, what shall we say of the millions of men who have lived, and are now living, on this earth? Surely *their* welfare cannot be thought insignificant by anyone, least of all by their Creator.

(3.) *The supposed inhabitants of other planets.*

But it may be said, what about other planets? Are not some of these inhabited, and does not this weaken the argument a good deal, and show that God cannot take any special interest in man, or other beings on this earth?

Now there is, of course, no reason why God should take any *special* interest in the beings on this planet, more than in similar beings on other planets, if such exist, but this is very doubtful. For modern science has shown that natural laws, such as those of gravity, light, heat, etc., are the same throughout the entire universe; and this makes it probable that the laws of life are also the same. And, therefore, if living beings exist on other planets, we should expect them to be somewhat similar to the living beings here; and to have been evolved in a somewhat similar manner. And this requires that a large number of favourable circum-

stances, such as a regular and moderate heat supply, a suitable atmosphere, sufficient water, etc., should all be found on some other planet, not only now, but during the long ages which (judging by this earth) appear necessary for the development of the higher forms of life ; and this certainly seems unlikely.

On the other hand, it is difficult to believe that God would create an immense number of suns or stars, many of which have probably planets round them, if only one out of the whole series was to be inhabited by personal beings. But however strange this may seem to us, it is in strict agreement with God's methods in nature, where what seems to be needless waste is the universal rule. So this is not an insuperable difficulty.

The question, however, may well be left an open one, for even if other planets are inhabited, there is no reason why God should not take an interest—and perhaps a great interest—in their inhabitants, as well as in ourselves ; since all His capacities are boundless, and even an infinitesimal part of *infinity* may be very large.

(C.) THE EXISTENCE OF EVIL.

We now come to the other, and perhaps more important, objection, that arising from the existence of evil. The world, it is said, is full of pain and misery, and is not this fatal to its having been designed and created by a God Who cares for the welfare of His creatures ? Or, to put the objection in other words, does not the existence of this evil, or indeed of any evil at all, using that word in its widest sense, to include both physical suffering and moral wrong, show that

God either could not or would not prevent it? If He *could* not, he is not All-Powerful; if He *would* not, He is not All-Good. This is an undoubted difficulty; and, considering its importance, we will examine it in detail, both as it affects animals and men.

But it may be remarked at starting that the difficulty is common to all theories. For though the idea that all this evil is due to a *good* God seems improbable, the opposite idea that the world was designed by a *bad* Being, who wishes men to be miserable, is out of the question. Every happiness in life contradicts it. And so does the general consent of mankind, for however much men have puzzled over the existence of evil, they have seldom thought the existence of *good* needed any explanation. While the only other alternative, that the Creator is *indifferent*, and does not care whether man is happy or miserable, seems also improbable, since He has Himself made us capable of feeling pleasure and pain, and keenly sensitive to both. And if this difficulty is urged as opposed to Theism altogether, or the existence of any Supreme Being, we must remember that though Theism may not account for it satisfactorily, neither Atheism nor Agnosticism can account for it at all. When considered by itself it leads towards Dualism, or the eternal existence of both a Good and an Evil Power. But the unity of nature is hopelessly opposed to such a view. Moreover, the difficulty, though great, is by no means insuperable.

(I.) *Physical evil in animals.*

The objection here is that animals of all kinds suffer

a vast amount of pain and misery, which is wholly *unmerited* and perfectly *useless*; since, having no moral nature, they can neither deserve pain nor profit by it. We will consider these points in turn.

And first, as to the *extent* to which animals suffer. One animal does not suffer more because a million suffer likewise, so we must consider the suffering as it affects the individual, and not the total amount. And as to its extent we know but little. That animals appear to suffer greatly, *e.g.*, a mouse being caught by a cat, is obvious; but how far they really suffer is doubtful, as their feelings are probably far less sensitive than those of man; and therefore it is quite misleading to think what *we* should feel like in similar circumstances. This is evident when we reflect that suffering is connected with the brain, as is shown by the fact that savages suffer much less than civilised nations. And therefore we should expect animals, whose mental development is far less advanced, to suffer still less; while the lower forms of life we should not expect to suffer at all.

And this also is confirmed by observation, as several facts have been noticed which almost force us to this conclusion. For instance, a crab will continue to eat, and apparently relish, a smaller crab, while being itself slowly devoured by a larger one; and this clearly shows that the crab can feel scarcely any pain, since the almost universal effect of pain is to destroy the pleasure of eating. And many other instances are known.¹ The only argument on the other side is

¹ Transactions of Victoria Institute, vol. xxv., p. 257.

that the bodies of the lower animals when ill-treated appear to writhe as if in great pain ; but in many cases there is certainly no pain at all. For instance, if a worm is cut in half, the tail end, just as much as the other, will writhe, though obviously it can feel no pain.

Moreover, animals, except domestic ones which are partly trained and civilised, appear to have no anticipation of suffering, and no power of concentrating their thoughts upon it, which increases it so greatly in man. And assuming, with reference to the above example, that the mouse is not to live always, its being destroyed by a cat is at most a very short misery, and perhaps involving altogether less pain than if it died from disease or gradual decay. On the whole, then, it seems probable that pain in the animal world is far less than is commonly assumed, and in the lower forms of life nearly, if not entirely, absent.

Still it may be said this lessens the difficulty, but it does not remove it. For why should animals suffer pain at all ? It is, as far as we can judge, wholly *unmerited*, since, having no moral nature, and therefore no responsibility, they cannot have done anything wrong to deserve it. But we must remember that if the pain which animals suffer is unmerited, the pleasure which they enjoy is equally so. The two must in all fairness be taken together. And it is probable that were there no capacity for pain, there would be no capacity for pleasure, since the same nervous system gives rise to both. And, as a matter of fact, animals seem to have a much greater amount of pleasure than

pain. Their life is, as a rule, one of continual enjoyment, and probably, at any given moment, the number of animals of any species that are happy is incomparably greater than those that are miserable. In short, health and happiness is the rule, sickness and pain the exception.

Nor can it be said that pain is *useless* to animals ; for though they have no moral nature to be improved, they have a physical nature to be preserved and transmitted, and the sense of pain may be essential for this. It is indeed a kind of sentinel, warning them of dangers which might otherwise lead to their destruction. For example, if animals felt no pain from excessive heat, they might not escape when a forest was burning ; or, if they felt no pain from hunger, they might die of starvation. And the same applies in other cases, so that pain is, in reality, a great *preservative of life*. We have, thus, no sufficient reason for saying that the pain which animals suffer is useless ; and with this the last and most important part of the objection falls to the ground.

(2.) *Physical evil in man.*

We now pass on to the case of man. We unfortunately know a great deal of the suffering which he endures. The struggling lives, the painful diseases, the lingering deaths, not to mention accidents of all kinds, are but too evident. And it may be asked, would an Omnipotent God, Who cared for man's welfare, have ever designed all this ?

Now it is important to remember that a great deal of physical evil originates in *moral* evil, which will be

considered later on. By far the greater part of the pain and misery which men endure is probably brought about by their own wickedness and folly, or by that of their fellow-men. It is their doing, and not God's ; and they alone must be blamed for it.

In the next place, many of the so-called evils of life do not imply any actual suffering. If for instance a man loses the sight of one eye, he need not have any pain ; and were he originally blind, the possession of even one eye would have been looked upon as a priceless blessing. But being always accustomed to having two eyes, having only one is now looked upon as an affliction ; and the same applies in other cases. Again, however great may be the sufferings of life, they cannot be as great as its joys, since nearly everyone wishes to go on living. And there is also a vast amount of *unconscious* happiness in the world, for men are so constituted that they may be happy (and as a rule are so) without knowing it : though no one can be *unhappy* without knowing it. While it is undeniable that human pain, like that of animals, is most useful, serving to warn men of dangers and diseases, which would otherwise lead to their destruction.

Moreover, in a material world like ours, if the forces of nature act according to fixed laws, a certain amount of suffering seems *inevitable*. If, for example, the force of gravity always acts as it does, it will occasionally cause a tower to fall and injure someone. Such an event could only be avoided by God's continually interfering with these forces, or, in popular language, working miracles. But this would render all human

life a hopeless confusion. While, at present, owing to these forces being invariable, a great deal of the evil which might otherwise result from them can be foreseen and avoided. If, however, men will not avoid it,—if, for instance, in spite of the numerous eruptions of Vesuvius, they still choose to go and live on its slopes,—it is hard to see how they can blame anyone but themselves.

And even in other cases, when the evil cannot be foreseen, as in an unexpected earthquake, it is at least open to doubt whether (assuming so many million men have to die every year) it is any worse for a few thousand to die like this, suddenly and together, than that they should all die slowly, one by one, and often after a long illness. It of course appeals more to the imagination, but it probably involves less suffering.

Thus we may say that human suffering, excluding that due to man himself, is by no means so great as it seems ; that it is, as a rule, more than counter-balanced by human happiness ; and that a certain amount seems not only useful, but in a world like ours inevitable. But though all these considerations are undoubtedly true, and undoubtedly lessen the difficulty, they do not remove it ; since there is far more suffering in the world than can be thus accounted for.

The following appears to be the true explanation ; that though God foreknew all this suffering when He created the world, and in this sense *designed* it, He need not have *desired* it, but may have desired something else, for the attainment of which however this

suffering was a necessary condition. And this *something else* must obviously have been the training and perfecting of man's character, for which suffering of some kind seems essential.

For if there were no suffering in the world, there could be no fortitude, no bravery, no patience, no compassion, no sympathy with others, no self-sacrifice for their good—nothing, in fact, that constitutes the highest type of man. In other words, a being such as man can only be made perfect through suffering. And therefore this suffering implies no defect in God's design. It is a means, and, as far as we can judge, the only possible means for developing the highest and noblest character in man, such a character indeed as alone makes him worthy of admiration. Moreover, a man's character can only be formed by himself, it cannot be given him ready-made ; and it can only be formed gradually, it cannot be done all at once. And therefore, if God wishes a man to have the special character acquired by constantly bearing suffering, it can only be obtained by constantly giving him suffering to bear.

Here, then, we have the most probable explanation of the physical evils which man endures. Their object is to develop and perfect his character ; and as this is in itself a good object, and as it cannot be obtained in any other way, they may well have been designed by a good God. And the more we contemplate the vast amount of human suffering—and there certainly is a vast amount in spite of all explanations—the more we feel how vast must be also the Goodness of God, what an intense longing He must have for man's truest and

best welfare, to be willing to bring it about at such a tremendous cost. So that, as it has been happily expressed, if God is good at all, He must be *very good* to have designed such a world as ours.

(3.) *Moral evil in man.*

But it may be urged that, even admitting the necessity and value of physical evils, these are greatly aggravated by *moral* evil—that is, by a man wilfully causing misery to himself and others—and might not this have been avoided? In other words, could not all *sin* have been excluded from the world? But assuming man to be a *free being*, it could not have been avoided, for freedom is always liable to abuse. And therefore, if God decided that man was to be free in some cases to act right or wrong, it necessarily follows that he may act wrong. No Omnipotence could possibly alter this without destroying man's freedom. And hence, though the Creator designed all the moral evil in the world, He need not have desired it, but (as before) may have desired some totally different object, for the attainment of which, however, the existence of this evil was a necessary condition.

Nor, again, is it difficult to suggest what this object may have been. For unless man is a free being, he can be little better than a machine—a correctly-behaved machine, no doubt, and one able to talk and think, but still only a machine. And God may not have wished that man, who is, as far as we know, His highest and noblest work, should be only a machine. Indeed, the superiority of free men who act right, though they might act wrong, to mere machines is

obvious to everyone; and it may far outweigh the disadvantage that some of them should act wrong. And therefore, though we have to pay dearly for freedom, it is well worth the price; and the *infinite value of goodness*, as it is called, may justify, though nothing else could, the risks involved in giving man free will.

Nor is there anything unlikely in the Creator thus caring about the conduct of His creatures. We certainly should not admire an earthly ruler who regarded traitors to his cause and his most faithful adherents with the same indifference; or an earthly parent who did not care whether his children obeyed him or not. Why, then, should we think that God, Who has not only given us free will, but also a conscience by which to know what is right (*i.e.*, what is *His* will), should yet be indifferent as to whether we do it or not? Everything points the other way, that God, Who is a Moral Being, and Who has made us moral beings also, wishes us to voluntarily act right. And therefore of necessity He allows us to act wrong, with all its consequent miseries, in order to render possible our thus freely choosing to act right.

Or to put the argument in other words, a free being is far higher than a being who is not free, and yet a free being cannot exist without the possibility of his acting wrong. And, therefore, however strange the conclusion appears, moral evil, or at least its possibility, is essential to the universe, if it is to be worthy of its Creator, if, that is, it is to contain beings of the highest order—*persons* and not *things*. Or, to put it

still shorter, if God is good, it is only natural that He should create beings capable of goodness, and therefore of necessity capable of badness, for the two must go together.

And if it be still urged that, as God foreknew how men would use their freedom, He need not have created those who would habitually use it wrongly ; in other words, there might be no *wicked men* in the world, the answer is obvious. Wicked men are as necessary, perhaps more so, than any other form of evil to test a man's character, and to develop moral perfection. For just as physical evil, pain, suffering, etc., can alone render possible certain physical virtues, such as fortitude and patience ; so moral evil, or sin, can alone render possible certain moral virtues.

If, for instance, there were no sin in the world, there could be no forbearance with the faults of others, no moral courage in standing alone for an unpopular cause, no forgiveness of injuries, nor (what is perhaps the highest of all virtues) any rendering good for evil. These require not merely the possibility, but the actual existence of sin, and they would be all unattainable if we had nothing but physical evils to contend with, and there were only good men in the world. The case then stands thus. Evil men are essential to an evil world. An evil world is essential to proving a man's character. Proving a man's character is essential to his freely choosing to serve God ; and his freely choosing to serve God seems essential to his being such a servant as God would care to have.

One other point should be noticed before we con-

clude. It is that with regard to the conduct of free beings, *foreknowing* is not the same as *foreordaining*. God may have foreknown how a man would use or misuse his freedom, without foreordaining or compelling him to do either, since his conduct is by hypothesis free. In the same way, in human affairs it is possible in some cases, and to some extent, to foreknow what a man will do, but without in any way foreordaining or compelling him to do it. This is a most important distinction, and we have no reason whatever for saying that God foreordained any man to misuse his freedom, though He may have foreknown that he would do so.

(D.) CONCLUSION.

We may now sum up the arguments in this chapter. We have shown that God is certainly able to take an interest in man's welfare ; and that it is not only probable that He would do so, but that the marks of beneficent design afford abundant evidence that He actually does. On the other hand, the so-called *insignificance of man* is more apparent than real, since his position at the end of evolution shows his great importance ; while his mind and spirit fully account for this, and prove him to be an altogether unique being, certainly in regard to this earth, and perhaps in regard to the universe.

And our conclusion in regard to the *Existence of Evil* is this. It is undeniable that God must have foreknown all the evil in the world when He created it ; and in this sense He designed it. But He may also have foreknown, what we can only *foreguess*, that this

evil is but temporary, and that it will lead to a more than compensating permanent good, which could not be obtained in any other way. God, it must be remembered, has eternity to work in, and His plan embraces the whole universe ; so it is not surprising that, with our finite knowledge, we do not altogether understand it. Suffice it to say, that we do understand it to some extent. We perceive that the evils in this world " need not be *ends*, but may be only *means* to ends ;" and, for all we know, they may be the very best means for obtaining the very best ends. Indeed, as before said, they seem to be not only the best, but the only possible means for developing all that is highest and noblest in man. We conclude, then, that though God designed both the evil and the good in the world, He need not have desired both : and there are indications in nature sufficient to show that the good is what He desired, and the evil is only its inevitable companion.

This conclusion is often expressed by saying that *Goodness* is an attribute of the Deity ; and the term may certainly be admitted. For though it is doubtless a very inadequate one, and does not fully express the reality, it is immeasurably nearer the truth than *badness*, or even *indifference* would be. But it is important to notice the sense in which it is used, and in which alone it is true.

By God's *goodness*, then, or by His taking an interest in man's welfare, is not meant a mere universal beneficence, or wishing to make everyone as happy as possible, irrespective of his conduct. The existence of

evil seems fatal to such a theory as this. But rather God wishes to promote man's welfare in the truest and best way, not by gratifying every passing fancy, but by training and developing his character, so that he may be able to enjoy the highest form of happiness. God's character is thus not only *beneficent*, but *righteous* also. And He therefore wishes man to be not only happy, but righteous also. And He therefore of necessity (as a man cannot be made righteous against his will) gives him *free* will, with the option of being unrighteous, and consequently unhappy. So that this view of God's character, combining beneficence with righteousness, not only accounts for the marks of beneficent design all through nature, but also for the existence of evil, especially moral evil, in man, and seems the only way of reconciling them. In short, beneficence and righteousness are both good, and the Goodness of God includes both.

Now if we admit that goodness is an attribute of the Deity, the analogy from God's other attributes would show that He possesses it in its highest perfection ; so that God is a Being not only of infinite *Power* and *Wisdom*, but also of perfect *Goodness*—the word "perfect" being obviously more suitable to a moral quality like goodness than "infinite" would be. And it will be noticed that these three great attributes of the Deity correspond to the three chief Theistic arguments. The first, that from causation, proves the existence of an All-Powerful Creator ; the second, that from design, proves that He is All-Wise ; and the third, that from human consciousness, proves that He

is All-Good. They also correspond to some extent to the three aspects under which we considered man's character in the last chapter ; so we arrive at the grand conclusion that God is physically *All-Powerful*, mentally *All-Wise*, and morally *All-Good*.

CHAPTER VI.

THAT THEREFORE GOD MIGHT MAKE SOME REVELATION TO MAN.

This depends chiefly on man's future destiny.

(A.) THE IMMORTALITY OF MAN.

By this is meant the personal immortality of man's spirit,
and there are several arguments in its favour :

- (1.) From his unique position.
- (2.) From his unjust treatment.
- (3.) From his vast capabilities.
- (4.) From his inherent belief.
- (5.) Counter arguments.

(B.) THE PROBABILITY OF A REVELATION.

- (1.) From God's character.
- (2.) From man's character ; since mentally he can understand it, and morally he can profit by it ; while he also desires it, and his unique position makes him not altogether unworthy of it.
- (3.) Two objections : a revelation is said to be unjust, as only given to certain men ; and anyhow incredible unless quite convincing. But neither of these can be maintained.

We decided in the last two chapters that man is a free and responsible being, and that God takes an interest in his welfare. We now come to the subject of a *Revelation*, which we will define as any superhuman knowledge directly imparted by God to man. And

by *superhuman* knowledge is meant any knowledge^e which man could not otherwise obtain; such, for instance, as God's object in creating him, His wishes in regard to his conduct, or any past or future events of which he would otherwise be ignorant. And that God could, if He chose, impart such knowledge, either by visions, or dreams, or in some other way, can scarcely be disputed. Nor will anyone affirm (least of all an Agnostic) that we know enough about God to be quite sure that He never would chose to do so. And therefore a revelation is certainly *possible*; but is it at all *probable*? And as this will depend to a great extent on man's future destiny, we will first consider the question of his *Immortality*, and then the probability, or otherwise, of God's making a *Revelation* to him.

(A.) THE IMMORTALITY OF MAN.

By this is of course meant the immortality of man's *spirit*, and if we admit (as was admitted in Chapter IV.) that man is a compound being, consisting of a free and partly supernatural spirit, his real *self*, which controls his body and mind, what becomes of this spirit at death? We know what becomes of the body: the various molecules are re-arranged in other groups, and the natural forces are transformed into other natural forces. Nothing is lost or annihilated. But what becomes of the spirit? If this is a free supernatural force, the idea that it should perish altogether, when the accompanying natural forces are re-arranged at death, is most unlikely. Indeed the apparent indestructibility of matter points to a corresponding immortality of spirit.

- No doubt God could, *if He chose*, destroy either, just as He could create either ; but without some supernatural interference, the creation or destruction of either seems incredible. And yet if a man's spirit is not destroyed, it must survive ; for it does not seem to have any component parts into which it can be split up like a man's body. And therefore, as it cannot be subjected to the only form of death of which we have any knowledge, which is the re-arrangement of constituent parts in other groups, it may survive for ever. And there are four chief arguments in favour of this *personal immortality* of man ; which are derived from his *unique position*, his *unjust treatment*, his *vast capabilities*, and his *inherent belief*. And we will consider each in turn, and then see what can be said on the other side.

(I.) *From his unique position.*

The first argument is from man's *unique position*, more especially when we regard him as the last and noblest result of the vast scheme of evolution, which has been in progress here for so many thousands of years. For such a vast scheme, like everything else, requires not only a *cause*, but a *purpose* ; and however much evolution can explain, it cannot explain itself. Why should there have been any evolution at all ? Why should a universe of dead matter have ever produced life ? There must have been some motive in all this, and what adequate motive can be suggested ?

We can only look for an answer in *man*, who seems not only the highest creature on this planet (or as far as we know on any planet), but also a personal and

moral being, so here if anywhere we must find the explanation. Evolution would then have *God* for its Cause, and *man* for its purpose—an undoubtedly adequate *Cause*, but is it an adequate *purpose*?

For the human race cannot exist for ever as it is. Everything points to this earth sooner or later falling into the sun, when all forms of life must cease. And therefore, if man is not immortal, the whole of evolution which has led up to him as its final end will still have had no *permanent* result. And no result which is not permanent seems altogether worthy of the Eternal God, the Author of this evolution. But if, on the other hand, man is immortal, and if this earth, with its strange mixture of good and evil, is a suitable place in which to form and test his character, and if perhaps God wishes hereafter to be surrounded by men who have stood the test, and have proved their fidelity to Him by enduring suffering for His sake; then it may lead to a *permanent* result. And then its creation would not be such a hopeless mystery as on the opposite theory; for the perfecting of immortal beings seems an object worthy even of God.

Thus if we deny the immortality of man, the whole of evolution becomes meaningless, and nature is a riddle without a solution. But if we admit it, there is at least the possibility of a satisfactory answer. For then, as just said, nature is seen to be only *a means to an end*—a temporary (though perhaps necessary) means to a permanent end—the end being to produce *man* (a being endowed with free will), and when this is done to provide a suitable environment for his moral

•training. And this will enable him, if he wishes, from being a *free* man, to become also a *righteous* man, that is, a man who acts right, though he might act wrong, and thus to some extent worthy to share in his Maker's immortality.

And we must remember, man could not have been created righteous, using the word in its strict sense. He might have been created *perfect* (like a machine), or *innocent* (like a child), but to be *righteous* requires, as just said, his own co-operation. It is a *self-acquired* virtue, due to the habit of freely acting right, though one might act wrong; and this of necessity is a slow process, with some failures. But the end aimed at is a permanent, and therefore perhaps an adequate, end, and the present world seems exactly suited to attain this end, as it affords a man boundless opportunities (almost every day, if he likes to use them) of acting right, though he might act wrong.

And thus the gradual training and perfecting of *man* seems the only adequate explanation of the world, the real object of its long evolution. And yet, if he is not *immortal*, this object can never be attained, for no one reaches moral perfection here; while even if they did, it would only last for a short time. And is it likely that such a vast scheme should end in failure, or at most in only a temporary success? Is it not rather probable that if man is the end of evolution, then God, the Author of evolution, must value him; and if God values him, He is not likely to let him perish for ever. In short (as it has been well put), such vast progress from such small

beginnings points to an end proportionately great,¹ and this requires the immortality of man. On the whole, then, we may say in the words of Romanes, one of the great champions of evolution, 'only by means of this theory of probation is it possible to give any meaning to the world, *i.e.*, any *raison d'être* of human existence.'¹

(2.) *From his unjust treatment.*

The second argument is from man's *unjust treatment* in this world. For, as we saw in the last chapter, God is a Moral Being, capable of distinguishing right from wrong, and, as far as we can judge, He is One Who will always act right Himself. And yet His treatment of men in this world seems most unjust. Wicked men are allowed to prosper by their wickedness, good men suffer unjustly, while some men's lives seem to be nothing but suffering ; and how is this to be accounted for ?

There is here again one, and only one, satisfactory explanation, which is that this life is not the whole of man's existence, but only a preparation for a *future life*—a short trial for a long hereafter. And, looked at from this point of view, the most apparently miserable lives may afford as valuable training, perhaps more so, than the outwardly happy ones. The temptation to dishonesty, for example, can be as well resisted by a poor man who is only tempted to steal sixpence, as by a rich man who is tempted to embezzle a thousand pounds. And if resisting such a temptation helps to form a man's character, as it certainly does, and hence, perhaps, to fit him for a better life hereafter,

¹ *Thoughts on Religion*, 1895, p. 142.

this can be as well done in the one case as in the other. And the same principle applies universally ; even a child has his temptations, which are very real *to the child*, though they may seem ridiculous to us. So that if this life is intended as a time of probation in which to form a man's character, we cannot imagine a better system or one more admirably adapted to the end in view.

Nor is this all, for these trials and sufferings themselves may be the very means of adding to man's future happiness. The joy of having resisted temptation, for instance, would be impossible if men were never tempted ; and the joy of rescuing others from suffering and sin, and thus perhaps making everlasting friendships, would be impossible if there were no suffering, and no sin. And the same applies in other cases. And therefore man's long probation in this life, with its incessant battle against evil, may (for all we know) increase his future happiness in a way which nothing else could possibly do, and to an extent of which perhaps we can form no conception. No pain or suffering, then, can be looked upon as useless, and no position in this world as one to be despised ; in short, to anyone who believes in a future state, life is always worth living. And we may be sure that in a future state every injustice will be made good, and all wrongs will be righted.

(3.) *From his vast capabilities.*

The third argument is from man's *vast capabilities*. For he does not seem adapted to this life only, and has aspirations and longings far beyond it. His powers

seem capable of continual and almost endless development. Nearly all men wish for immortality. This life does not seem to satisfy them entirely. For instance, men, especially scientific men, have a longing after knowledge which can never be fully realised in this world. A man's capacities are thus out of all proportion to his destiny, if this life is all; and to many it seems improbable that the Creator should have endowed men with such needless and useless capacities.

And this is strongly confirmed by the analogy of nature. For example, a bird in an egg shows rudimentary organs which cannot be exercised so long as it remains in the egg; and this of itself is a proof that it is intended some day to leave the egg. On the other hand, a full-grown bird seems, as far as we can judge, to be entirely adapted to its present state, and not to have any longing after or capacity for any higher state; and therefore we may infer that no higher state is intended for it. And by the same reasoning we may infer that some higher state is intended for man, for his mental and spiritual nature is not entirely satisfied by his present life. In short, all animals seem made for this world alone, and man is the one unsatisfied being in the universe.

Moreover, the period of preparation in a man's life seems out of all proportion to the time prepared for, if death ends all. The development in a man's moral character often continues till nearly the close of his life. His character has then reached maturity. But for what is it matured? Surely not for immediate destruction. Must not the wise Creator, Who designed everything

else in the universe with such marvellous skill, have intended something better for His noblest creature than mere boundless capabilities, unsatisfied longings, and a lifelong preparation all for nothing ?

(4.) *From his inherent belief.*

The fourth argument is from man's *belief* in immortality. For such a belief has existed among men in nearly every age and country, learned and ignorant, civilised and uncivilised. It was implied by the Neolithic men who buried food and weapons with their dead, and it was maintained by such philosophers as Socrates and Plato, and how are we to account for it ? It cannot have arisen from experience ; and the attempts to explain it as due to the desire which men have for immortality, or to someone occasionally dreaming that he sees a departed friend, are quite inadequate. Desire is not conviction, and dreams are notoriously untrustworthy. They might account for an individual here and there entertaining this belief, but not for mankind always and everywhere doing so.

The belief, then, seems intuitive and an inherent part of human nature ; though, like other intuitive beliefs, such as that of right and wrong, it is more fully developed in some nations than in others, and may sometimes be entirely absent. What, however, makes it almost certain that it is intuitive is, that nothing but such a belief could have been strong enough to withstand the apparent contradiction afforded by every grave. And we may ask, is it likely that God should have implanted such a strange belief in man if it were erroneous ?

These, then, are the four great arguments in favour of man's immortality—that derived from his unique position, his unjust treatment in this world, his vast capabilities, and his inherent belief. And not one of them applies to animals; so the common objection, that if man is immortal, animals must be so too, is quite untenable.

(5.) *Counter-arguments.*

On the other hand, the great and only important argument *against* man's immortality is that his spirit seems to be inseparably connected with his body. As far as we can judge, it is born with the body, it often inherits the moral character of its parents, just as the body inherits bodily diseases, it certainly develops and matures with the body, and in most cases it seems to gradually decay with the body, and therefore it is inferred the two perish together.

But this does not follow; for, as was shown in a previous chapter, our memory alone proves that we have something immaterial which survives in spite of everything material changing; and therefore it is not unlikely that this immaterial something (our spirit) may survive the still greater change at death. The body would thus be like the instrument of the spirit, by which it manifests itself in the outer world; and hence, if the instrument gets out of order, its manifestations will become confused, but without implying that the spirit itself is so. In the same way, if we shut up a clerk in a telegraph office, as soon as his instruments get out of order, the messages he sends, which are his only means of communicating with the outer world,

Will become confused, and finally cease, but without implying that there is anything wrong with the clerk himself. And this is confirmed by the fact that instances are known in which a man's intellect-and will have remained quite vigorous all through a mortal sickness, and up to the very moment of death ; so that the gradual decay of the body does not necessarily involve that of the mind and spirit.

On the whole, then, this is not an insuperable difficulty ; while the previous arguments render the idea of a future life *distinctly probable*. And this has, of course, a most important bearing on our next question ; indeed, it is scarcely too much to say that the probability of a revelation depends on that of a future life. For if death ends all, man's existence is so short that a revelation can scarcely be thought probable ; but if man is to live for ever, the case is very different.

(B.) THE PROBABILITY OF A REVELATION.

Now (assuming man to be immortal) a revelation, from whichever side we regard it, appears to be somewhat *probable*. For God is a Being, Who seems likely to give a revelation ; and man is a being pre-eminently suited to receive one ; so we will consider these points first, and then the chief objections to a revelation.

(1.) *From God's character.*

Now since God is a Personal and Moral Being, Who takes an interest in man's welfare, we may infer that, if a revelation were beneficial to man, as it probably would be, it would be in harmony with God's character to confer it. And when we add to this the fact that God is not only beneficent but *righteous*, and appar-

ently wishes to train and develop man's character so that he may be righteous also, and this with the idea of his living in some future state, then a revelation cannot be thought to be at all improbable.

Moreover, as we have shown, man to some extent resembles God. Like Him, he is a personal and moral being, and, as far as we know scientifically, the only other being in the universe who is either personal or moral, so that he may be appropriately called a *child* of God. And God seems to care for his welfare, just as a human father would care for the welfare of his children. And it is certainly probable, if a human father loved his children, that he would wish to hold some intercourse with them. And if we are in any sense God's children, and He really cares for our welfare, is it not likely that He would do the same?

Some would even push the argument further, and say that it seems *unlikely* for God to create a race of personal beings without holding some intercourse with them; in the same way that it would be unlikely for a man to paint a picture without looking at it, or to arrange a concert without listening to it. For a personal being seems to differ from all else in this very point, that he is able to hold intercourse with other personal beings; it is, so to speak, one of his distinguishing features, and therefore as God has created such beings, it seems only natural that He should hold some intercourse with them.

And if we admit this, the whole idea of Evolution would tend to show that during the long period of man's infancy (what we now call palæolithic and

neolithic times), when man was imperfect in every other respect, this intercourse would also be of the most imperfect and elementary kind. It would thus correspond to what we now call Natural Theology in its simplest form, though it is doubtful whether at that early age even the truths of Natural Theology could have been discovered by man's reason alone, without being in some way revealed by God. And then when man became sufficiently advanced to appreciate it, and to be able to hand it on accurately,—and this would require the use of writing, and must therefore have been comparatively late in his history—some definite Revelation might be given. And this again might become more and more perfect, as man himself became more perfect. At all events, if this were the case, it would be in accord with God's methods in nature ; and therefore God's character, *so far as we have any means of judging of it*, seems in favour of His making some Revelation—and that a *progressive* Revelation—to man.

(2.) *From man's character.*

Passing on now to man's character, it must be noticed that he has been given a nature exactly fitted to receive a revelation. This can scarcely be disputed, for religion of some kind is, and always has been, practically universal ; and (if we disregard the prehistoric times, as to which we have not sufficient information) nearly all important religions have rested on real or pretended revelations from God, and have been accepted in consequence. Natural Theology *alone*, however noble its teaching, has never been able

to influence the masses. It exists chiefly in books, and the actual nature of man has everywhere led him to seek for, demand, and, if need be, imagine a revelation from God. Nor is this surprising when we examine his nature in detail.

For, in the first place, man's mental character would enable him to *understand* and appreciate a revelation if one were given him, while his moral character would enable him to *profit* by it. For man is not a mere machine, or a mere animal; he possesses a known freedom of action. And therefore if God tells him what He wishes him to do, man can, if he chooses, do it. And since, as already shown, God seems to value man's conduct, a revelation which would influence him to act right, and yet without forcing him, and thereby destroying his freedom, and making it impossible for him to act either right or wrong, is certainly not improbable. And that the knowledge alleged to be given by revelation might influence him in this way cannot be denied; for, as a matter of fact, such knowledge, either real or pretended, has had precisely this effect on millions of men.

But more than this, not only can man understand and profit by a revelation, but he earnestly *desires* it. A thoughtful man cannot help wishing to know why he is placed in this world; why he is given free will; how he is meant to use his freedom; and what future, if any, is in store for him hereafter: in short, what was God's object in creating him. It seems of all knowledge to be the highest, the noblest, the

•most worth knowing. And therefore as this result of man's nature was not only brought about by God, but must have been foreknown, and intended by Him, it is not improbable that He should satisfy this craving of His own creating ; more especially as it cannot be satisfied in any other way, for the knowledge is by hypothesis superhuman, and therefore out of man's own reach. And it may be added, the more we realise this, and feel that God is *Unknowable*, in the sense that we can gain no satisfactory knowledge about Him by human science and reasoning, so much the more likely does it seem that He should give us such knowledge by revelation.

And all this is still further strengthened when we consider man's *unique position* to which we have already alluded. For if we admit that the creation and perfecting of man is the chief object the Creator had in view for so many thousands of years, it does not seem unlikely that He might wish to hold some communication with him. In fact, as the whole of nature evidences design or purpose ; and as man occupies a special place in nature ; we may fairly conclude that God has some special purpose in regard to man, and, for all we know, may have something special to tell him about it.

We conclude then that man's mental and moral character, and the unique position he occupies on this earth, is a strong argument in favour of his receiving some revelation from God.

(3.) *Two objections.*

But now for the other side. There are two chief

objections to a revelation. The first is on the ground of *injustice* ; since any revelation, it is said, would imply a partiality to the men or nation to whom it was given, and would therefore be unjust to the rest of mankind. But this is quite untenable, for God's other benefits are not bestowed impartially. On the contrary, pleasure and pain, good and evil, are never equally distributed in this world. Partiality and apparent favouritism is the rule everywhere, and this without any seeming merit or demerit on the part of the men concerned. Moreover, the advantages of a revelation may not concern this world only ; and all who believe in a future life are convinced of God's equity, and that men will only be judged according to the knowledge of God's Will which they possessed, or might have possessed had they chosen, and not according to any higher standard which was out of their reach.

The other and more important objection is, that if God gave a revelation at all, it would be absolutely *convincing*. Everything that God does He does well ; and we cannot, it is urged, imagine His making a revelation to man, and yet doing it so imperfectly as to leave men in doubt as to whether He had done it or not. For this would imply that He either could not, or would not, make the evidence sufficient to ensure conviction, neither of which is credible.

Now, although all this seems very probable, a moment's reflection will show that it is not conclusive ; for exactly the same may be said in regard to the whole of Natural Religion. Is it likely, for instance, that God should create free and responsible men, and yet

Give them such insufficient evidence about it, that while many are fully convinced, others deny not only their own freedom and responsibility, but the very existence of the God Who made them? And yet He has done so. And therefore there is nothing improbable in the evidence for a revelation, if one were given, being of a similar character.

Indeed, there is much to be said in favour of its being so, since in most other matters man is left a free choice. He is often able to find out how he ought to think and how he ought to act, but he is not forced to do either. And God may have wished that the same rule should be followed in regard to a revelation, and that man should be left free to believe it or not, just as he is left free to act on it or not if he does believe it, and just as he is left free to choose right or wrong in other cases. And therefore we cannot say that no revelation can come from God unless the evidence for it be overwhelming. It would doubtless be sufficient to convince a man if he took the trouble to examine it carefully; only it need not be such as to compel conviction. What kind of evidence we may expect will be considered in the next chapter.

Neither of these objections, then, can be maintained, and we are forced back to the conclusion that, provided man is immortal, a revelation seems for several reasons to be somewhat probable. To put it shortly, if God is good and really cares for man's welfare, it seems unlikely that He should withhold from him that knowledge which is the highest, the noblest, and the most longed after;—the knowledge of Himself. While, if

man is really a free and immortal being, occupying a unique position in the world, and intended to live for ever, it seems unlikely that he should be told nothing, and therefore know nothing, as to why he was created or what is his future destiny. Thus when we consider both God's character and man's character, it seems on the whole to be somewhat *probable*, that God would make some revelation to man, telling him how he ought to use his freedom in this world, and possibly what future is in store for him hereafter.

CHAPTER VII.

THAT THEREFORE A MIRACULOUS REVELATION IS CREDIBLE.

A Divine messenger would probably have credentials.

(A.) SUPERHUMAN SIGNS.

These include superhuman *knowledge*, afterwards verified (such as prophecy), and superhuman *coincidences* ; and there is nothing incredible in either.

(B.) SUPERNATURAL SIGNS, or Evidential Miracles.

These are 'marvels specially worked by God as signs to attest a revelation.' This definition is threefold, referring to their outward aspect, cause, and purpose.

- (1.) As *Marvels* : though they appear to be contrary to experience, they are not really so, for we have no experience of the proper kind to refer to.
- (2.) As *Special Works of God* : they only interfere with the uniformity of nature in the same way that human works interfere with it.
- (3.) And as *Signs* : there is nothing to show that they are inconsistent with God's Character. Conclusion.

WE decided in the last chapter that it was probable that God might make some revelation to man, that is to say, to certain men, for them to make known to others. Now, it would obviously be desirable that these men should have some means of showing that the knowledge had come from God and not from themselves. It is not meant that this accompanying

evidence is in any way necessary to the revelation,⁴ but merely that it is somewhat probable. In other words, if God sends a message to man, it is somewhat probable that the messenger would have *credentials*. And this is especially so when we remember that men have often appeared in the world's history who professed to have a revelation from God, and have misled mankind in consequence. Is it not probable, then, that if God really did give a revelation, He would take care that His true messengers should have credentials which would distinguish them from the impostors?

These credentials, then, or *signs*, must obviously be such as could not be forged by man; and must therefore of necessity be *superhuman*, if not *supernatural*. So we may divide them into these two classes; and we have now to consider whether such signs are *credible*. By this we mean something more than merely possible; for the possibility of miracles follows at once from the existence of God. But are they credible? is there, that is, at least a very slight probability of their occurrence?

(A.) SUPERHUMAN SIGNS.

These include, to begin with, superhuman *knowledge*, which can afterwards be verified, such as *prophecy*. And there is no difficulty here, provided we admit a revelation at all. The only possible objection refers to prophecies regarding human conduct; which it may be said would interfere with man's freedom. But this is only part of the more general objection that any foreknowledge on God's part would interfere with man's freedom, which we have already considered

•in Chapter II.; and there is no special difficulty in regard to prophecies. In every case, as said before, God merely foreknows the use man will make of his freedom. And therefore the event will not occur *because* it was foretold, but rather it was foretold because God knew that it would occur.

Superhuman *coincidences* form another, and very important class of superhuman signs. In these a man's acts or sayings are attested by natural events *coinciding* with them in a remarkable manner. For example, suppose a prophet claimed to have a revelation from God, and, as a proof of this, invited the people to witness a sacrifice on a cloudless day. He then killed an animal, and placed it on an altar of stones, but put no fire under it, and even threw water over it. Suddenly, however, a heavy thunderstorm arose, and the sacrifice was struck by lightning. Now the thunderstorm might have arisen and the lightning might have struck on that particular spot, in strict accordance with natural laws; and yet the *coincidence* of this occurring just when and where the prophet wanted it, would tend strongly to show that God, Who must have foreknown and designed the coincidence, meant to confirm what the prophet said.

Or, to put the argument in other words, the lightning would seem to have struck the sacrifice *on purpose*; and therefore such events have been popularly described as *natural forces acting rationally*. Of course, as a rule, the forces of nature do not act rationally. A falling meteorite, for instance, does not go a yard out of its way to kill anyone or to spare him. Man,

on the other hand, does act rationally. His acts are directed for a purpose, and thus evidence design. And, in the events we are considering, the forces of nature seem also to act with a purpose, and this raises a strong presumption that the Author of these forces was really acting with this purpose. In short, the events seem to have been not only *superhuman*, but *designed coincidences*.

And they present no difficulty whatever from a scientific point of view, as they are part of the ordinary course of nature. And God might have arranged at the origin of the universe, or subsequently, so as to bring about the events just when and where He wanted them to attest any human acts or sayings, the foreknowledge of which He also possessed. Of course, the value of such coincidences varies greatly according to whether the event is of a usual or unusual character. In the latter case, more especially if the event is very unusual or the coincidence very striking, they are popularly called miracles. And they may have considerable value, though there is always a slight chance of the agreement being, as we might say, accidental.

(B.) SUPERNATURAL SIGNS.

We pass on now to supernatural signs or *Evidential Miracles* in the strict sense, which we will define as *marvels specially worked by God as signs to attest a revelation*. This definition has, of course, been framed to suit the miracles recorded in the Bible, and it is really threefold. In the first place, the miracle is described as to its *outward aspect*. It is a marvel—that is to say, it is a strange and unusual event, which

• we cannot account for, and which thus attracts attention. Secondly, it is described as to its *cause*. This marvel is said to have been specially worked by God—that is to say, by some action on His part different from His usual action in nature. While, lastly, it is described as to its *purpose*; it is a marvel worked by God as a sign to attest a revelation.

The first of these aspects is expressed in the Old Testament by the word *wonder*, the second by such phrases as God's *mighty hand* or *outstretched arm*, and the third by the word *sign*; all these terms being often used together.¹ While in the New Testament the words used are *wonders*, *mighty works*, and *signs*, which again exactly correspond to these three aspects of the miracles. They are, however, never called in the New Testament (and very seldom in the Old) wonders *alone*, though they are called signs alone, and mighty works alone.

And it should be noticed these aspects are not chosen arbitrarily, since other events can and ought to be looked at in the same way, not as mere facts, but also with reference to their alleged cause and purpose. And to show the great importance of this, we will consider an event from recent history; and select the well-known example of the Mont Cenis Tunnel.

Suppose, then, that anyone heard of this as a *marvel* only, the cause and purpose being left out of account. Suppose, that is, he heard that a hollow straight cavity of uniform size, and over seven miles long, had been formed under a range of mountains; and that it

¹ E.g., Deut. 6. 22; 7. 19; 11. 2.

had begun as two cavities, one from each end, which after years of growth, had exactly met in the middle. He would at once pronounce the event incredible, for the cavity presents features utterly unlike all natural cavities.

But now suppose the next point, as to its *cause*, to be introduced. It is said to be something more than a natural cavity, and to be the work of man. All previous difficulties would now vanish, but fresh ones would arise ; for numbers of men must have laboured together for years to excavate such a cavity, and from what we know of human nature, men will only thus combine for commercial or profitable ends, and not for boring holes through mountains ; so that the event is still practically incredible.

But now suppose the last point of *purpose* to be introduced. It is said that this is not a mere useless hole bored through a mountain ; but a hole bored for a particular purpose ; it is, in fact, a railway tunnel. Then all difficulties as to its credibility would disappear. Of course, whether we believe the tunnel was actually made depends upon what evidence we have ; but it is clear that when we consider the *cause* by which, and the *purpose* for which, it is alleged to have been made, there is nothing incredible about it.

Now a similar method must be adopted in regard to Evidential Miracles. They must not be regarded simply as *marvels* (and, as just said, the New Testament writers never so regard them), but as *marvels* said to have been brought about by an adequate *cause*, and for a sufficient *purpose*. And it is just these

elements of cause and purpose which may make the marvels credible. And each is equally important ; for a miracle without a sufficient purpose would be morally incredible, just as one without a sufficient cause would be mentally so. We will now consider these points in turn.

(I.) *Miracles as marvels.*

The first aspect of evidential miracles is that of marvels. As such, they are events which seem to be *contrary to our experience*—contrary, that is, to what our experience of apparently similar events would lead us to expect. Suppose, for instance, it were stated that on one occasion three men were thrown into a furnace, but instead of being burnt to death they walked about, and in a few minutes came out alive and unhurt.

Such a marvel would be contrary to our experience, and that it would be therefore *very improbable* is obvious. But is this improbability sufficient in all cases to make the event incredible, no matter what testimony there may be in its favour ? Hume's argument that it is sufficient is well known. He says that we can only judge of the probability of anything, whether it be the occurrence of an event or the truthfulness of the narrator, by *experience* ; and that as it is contrary to experience for miracles to be true, but not contrary to experience for testimony to be false, the balance of probability must always be against the miracle.

But of course this reasoning, if true, must apply to all alleged events which are contrary to experience.

And yet such events are not only credible, but have occurred by the thousand. Let us take a single example. Everyone has had some experience as to how far it is possible to hear the human voice distinctly, and till recent years this has invariably fixed the limit at a few hundred yards. Now, suppose anyone was told for the first time that it was possible to speak right across England, he would justly say that it was utterly contrary to experience ; but ought he to add that it was therefore incredible ?

From this it is clear that there must be some flaw in Hume's argument. And on examination this is easily discovered. For the argument regards the event only as a marvel, and *without reference to its alleged cause*. But we have no right to leave this out of account, nor do we in practice. When anyone first hears of a marvel, he does not merely compare it with his previous experience, and then come to a decision ; in which case, as Hume supposes, it might be always against the marvel ; but he first inquires how, and under what circumstances, is this strange event said to have been brought about. For if any cause is alleged to have been at work of the influence of which he knows nothing, then he has no experience of the proper kind to appeal to. There is the testimony in favour of the event as before ; and if he disbelieves it, he does so, not because it is contrary to his experience, but because he thinks the supposed cause either did not exist, or would not have had the effect asserted.

A reference to the previous example will make this quite plain. When the man first heard of persons

•talking across England, instead of at once declaring it incredible, he would, if a reasonable man, inquire as to the *cause* of this. He would then be told that a wire was stretched across England with an instrument called a telephone at each end. Now, as to the possibility or adequacy of such a contrivance he might doubt a good deal; but one thing would be quite clear, that this was a case to which his experience, however large, did not apply. The instant the wire was mentioned, *whether he believed it or not*, that instant the event was taken out of the range of his experience altogether.

This, then, is the explanation of Hume's argument. So long as a marvel, contrary to experience, is regarded *only* as a marvel, the probability must be always against its truth. But if we inquire as to the agency by which it was brought about, and find that some special cause is alleged, as to the influence of which we are ignorant, then the argument is no longer applicable. We have simply no experience of the proper kind to appeal to.

Now this is precisely the case with regard to evidential miracles. As marvels they seem contrary to experience; but they claim to have a *special cause*, to be specially worked by God—that is to say, by some action on His part different from His usual action in nature; and of the influence of this cause we have no experience whatever. We may, of course, deny its existence or doubt its adequacy; but the argument, as contrary to experience, vanishes.

It is clear then that the fact of evidential miracles seeming to be contrary to experience is no reason for

disbelieving *them*, though it might be a reason for disbelieving other alleged marvels, because they claim to have a special cause wherewith to account for this special character. So we have now to examine whether this special cause really existed—that is to say, we pass on to the second aspect of the miracles ; our conclusion thus far being that they are credible as *marvels*, if it be credible that they were *speciallly worked by God*.

(2.) *Miracles as special works of God.*

Now, any special action on God's part is often thought to present great difficulties, as interfering with the uniformity of nature. But, as we shall see, it would only interfere with it in the same way that human action interferes with it. Neither of them violates the laws of nature, though both are able to bring about results which nature of itself could not have brought about.

In the case of human action this is quite obvious. Suppose, for example, a clock with an iron pendulum is placed on a table and keeps perfect time. Suddenly, without anyone touching it, it begins to gain rapidly, and then, after an hour or so, goes on as before. To anyone unacquainted with the cause, this would appear a *marvel* : and might even be thought incredible, as (assuming the clock to be properly constructed) it would seem to imply some alteration in the laws of motion, or the force of gravity. And yet we know a man can easily produce such a marvel by simply holding a magnet under the table. The disturbing cause, it will be noticed, was not really the magnet, which always acts according to law ; nor the hand

•which held it ; but the action of the *human will* on matter. This took place in the man's brain, and gave a particular direction to some nerve-force, which enabled the man to move his hand, and hence the magnet. Thus we may say the marvel was produced by *natural means supernaturally applied* ; for the magnet was undoubtedly a natural means, and yet nature of itself would never have used it in the way described.

Now, evidential miracles claim to have been produced in a somewhat similar, though to us unknown, manner by the action of God's Will on matter, that is to say, by natural means supernaturally applied ; and, if so, their credibility under this head must be admitted. For we know that God has the power of acting on matter, and that He used it once in originating the universe, so He might use it again if He thought fit. Indeed, the creation seems the greatest of all miracles, and of itself renders any other credible. Moreover, God's knowledge of the laws of nature is complete, whereas man's is only partial. As, then, man, with his limited power over nature and partial knowledge of its laws, can produce marvels out of nature's ordinary course, and yet without violating any of its laws ; still more can God, Who has complete power over nature, and complete knowledge of its laws. For to deny this would be to deny to God the power which we concede to man.

And if it be objected that man can only do this through his having a material body, the answer is obvious. The action of the will on matter takes place in the brain, and the body is only a natural link in the

chain of cause and effect, and so does not alter the analogy. No doubt we cannot imagine how God can exert His Will over matter, but neither can we imagine how we can do it ourselves. The difficulty is as great in the one case as in the other.

From this it is clear that evidential miracles do not necessitate God's violating natural laws. And though at first one might be inclined to dispute this with regard to individual miracles, the statement is quite justified, provided we make due allowance for our own ignorance. Take, for example, the supposed case of the men in the furnace. This might be thought to violate the laws of heat, which necessitate a man's body being consumed in such circumstances. But even if we admit that a man's body must be kept below a certain temperature to sustain life, we cannot say that this was impossible in the furnace. For extreme heat, and even *extreme* cold, may be very close together, as is shown by the well-known experiment of freezing mercury inside a red-hot crucible. As a mere marvel this is quite as wonderful as the men in the furnace; and an ignorant man would probably pronounce both to be equally incredible. Of course, in all marvels produced by *man*, we know the special cause at work, and can therefore repeat it; but this does not justify us in saying that in a miracle, merely perhaps because we do not know it, the laws of nature must be violated.

Or, again, to take another example, suppose it was said that on one occasion a few loaves of bread were miraculously increased so as to feed some thousands of

persons ; could we say that this must have violated natural laws ? Certainly not, for bread is composed of the elements carbon, oxygen, etc., and these were in abundance all around. And though we only know one way in which they can be formed into bread, which is through the agency of a living plant, we cannot say that this is the only method. Indeed, there is nothing incredible in organic substances, including bread, being made in the laboratory some day. Such illustrations do not of course show *how* God worked the miracles ; they merely prevent us from saying that He could not have worked them, had He chosen, without violating natural laws.

It will thus be noticed that evidential miracles do not claim to be brought about by any action on God's part different in kind from how ordinary events are brought about, for each is produced in conformity with natural laws, and each is due originally to the action of God's Will on matter. Only, in the one case there are or may be an immense number of intermediate natural links, and in the other comparatively few. And hence it follows that all events are in a certain sense both natural and supernatural. They are natural as regards the mode in which they are brought about, and supernatural as regards the First Cause which brings them about ; so that the cause of the natural, if we go far enough back, is always supernatural.

And very possibly we need not go back at all ; for there is much to be said in favour of the theory of God's *immanence* in nature, as it is usually called, but which would perhaps be better described as

nature's immanence in God,¹ and which means that all natural forces are due to the present and immediate action of God's Will. And this seems to have been the view taken by the writers of the Old Testament, for all natural events, even the formation of clouds and rain, and the growth of grass, are ascribed to God in the same way that miracles are.² They did not therefore recognise any sharp distinction between the natural and the supernatural, but looked upon them all as God's works. In other words, this Divine *immanence* in nature, which modern science is beginning to realise, seems to have been known instinctively to the Jews. And if this theory is correct, it greatly lessens the difficulty as to miracles. For then there would be no *interference* with nature at all, God would be working there all the time, only in a miracle He would not be working in exactly the same way as in ordinary events.

But in any case there is, as we have shown, nothing incredible in the way in which evidential miracles are said to be *caused*, provided it is credible that God should wish to use His power over nature in the assumed manner; for natural forces are anyhow His servants, not His masters. And this leads us to the third aspect of the miracles; for whether God would wish to act in a certain way depends of course on what *purpose* He had in doing so.

(3.) *Miracles as signs.*

Now the purpose for which evidential miracles are said to be worked is *as signs to attest a revelation*. And

¹ Acts 17. 28; Col. 1. 17.

² E.g., Ps. 104, 147.

therefore, as we have already shown that it is somewhat probable that God would make a revelation, we have now only to inquire whether evidential miracles are suitable means for attesting it. And they appear to be the most suitable means possible ; for they would both attract men's attention to the revelation, and also convince them of its superhuman character ; and these are precisely the two points required. While their extraordinary character in the physical world would correspond with that of revelation itself in the mental world, which has been called a kind of mental miracle.

It may still be objected that God's character, as indicated by nature, is *Unchangeable* ; and that therefore it is most improbable that He would at times act in a special manner with regard to natural events. And the more nature is studied the stronger does this objection appear, since there are thousands of cases, such as storms and earthquakes, when it seems to us that a slight interference with the course of nature would be highly beneficial to man, and yet it never occurs. Or the objection may be otherwise expressed by saying that a miracle would reflect on either the Wisdom or the Power of God, since, if All-Wise, He would have foreseen the occasion, and if All-Powerful, He would have provided for it ; so that any subsequent interference with nature is something like having to remedy a fault.

This is no doubt the most serious objection to miracles, but it is by no means insuperable. In the first place, it rests to a great extent on our ignorance,

or at most partial knowledge, of God's character. For had we only our own sense of the fitness of things to judge by, we should never have thought that God would have created such a world as ours at all. The existence of evil, and especially that innocent men should suffer for guilty ones, are events we should have thought most unlikely ; and yet they occur every day. If, then, we are incompetent to decide how God would be likely to govern the world in an ordinary manner, still less can we say whether, under special circumstances, He might not deviate from this manner. And we must remember God is a Free Being, Who does not *always* act the same, even under the same circumstances (Chapter I.) ; so there is nothing improbable in His acting differently under different circumstances. And as part of the world which God has made is *free* (ourselves for instance) different circumstances may certainly arise.

Moreover, the objection is directly opposed to the analogy of the only other personal being we know of, which is man himself. A man may, as a rule, act uniformly, and yet on some special occasion, and for some special reason, he may, and often does, act differently ; and why should not God do the same ? In fact the only changelessness in a man which we could admire, would be a changelessness *in moral character*, always and invariably acting right. And for all we know the changelessness of God may be only of such a kind, and this certainly would not prevent Him from acting in some special manner, for the attainment of some special purpose.

- Secondly, in the case before us, it is even probable that He would do so, since the chief object of the miracles could not have been obtained by the ordinary course of nature, though their immediate effects might have been. For example, instead of healing men miraculously, they might be healed naturally ; but then there would be no evidence that the healer was sent by God, and was speaking in His name. In short, the messenger would be without *credentials* ; and, as we have already shown, this seems unlikely.

Thirdly, though evidential miracles do not show God's unchangeableness in the same manner as the unchanging course of nature, they are not inconsistent with it. For they are not asserted to be *after-thoughts* with God, but to have been planned from the very beginning. And if He foresaw that at certain periods in the world's history events would arise which, in order to carry out His purpose, could be best dealt with in some special manner, and therefore determined that when these events arose He would deviate from His usual way of working, this would involve no inconsistency or change on His part.

Fourthly, there may be some *other* attributes of God which evidential miracles show, and which the ordinary course of nature does not show ; such as His condescension in giving them at all. One object of a revelation might be to convince man that God really cared for his happiness and valued his affections. And there is nothing unlikely in supposing that, to attest such a revelation as this, God might condescend to manifest Himself more after a human manner, and to

act, not with the uniformity of nature, but more as a man would act, in order that man might the more readily understand Him.

While, lastly, we must remember that the whole of nature seems (as before said) to be only a means to an end, the end being the moral training of man. And if so, it is out of the question to think that *in order to further this end*—the very end for which nature itself exists—God might not, if He thought fit, interfere with nature, or modify the course of events. The scientific improbability of a miracle may thus be counterbalanced by its *moral probability*—i.e., by its being suitable for some moral purpose, such as attesting a revelation. And we may therefore answer the objection in one sentence, God is *All-Good*, as well as All-Wise, and All-Powerful; and His Goodness might induce Him to use miracles, though by His Wisdom and Power He might have dispensed with them.

We may now sum up the present argument. We showed that evidential miracles are credible both as *marvels* and as *special works of God*, if it be credible that they were brought about *as signs to attest a revelation*. And we have now shown that, on the supposition that God might make a revelation, which we have already admitted, there is nothing inconsistent with His character as far as we know it, and therefore nothing in the slightest degree incredible, in His using evidential miracles, as one of the means of attesting its truth. On the whole, then, we conclude that a Miraculous Revelation is certainly *credible*. Whether one has ever been made will be discussed in the following chapters.

PART II.

THE JEWISH RELIGION.

CHAP. VIII. THAT ITS ACCOUNT OF THE CREATION WAS DIVINELY
REVEALED.

„ IX. THAT ITS ORIGIN WAS ATTESTED BY MIRACLES.

„ X. THAT ITS HISTORY WAS ATTESTED BY MIRACLES.

„ XI. THAT ITS HISTORY WAS ALSO ATTESTED BY PROPHECIES.

„ XII. THAT THEREFORE THE JEWISH RELIGION IS PROBABLY
TRUE.

CHAPTER VIII.

THAT ITS ACCOUNT OF THE CREATION WAS DIVINELY REVEALED.

(A.) THE DAYS OF CREATION.

Some apparent difficulties ; but they disappear if the word *Day* is understood as a *Representative Term*, showing the insignificance of the time of creation in regard to God. Additional reasons for this view.

(B.) THE PRINCIPLES OF CREATION.

- (1.) Its pure Monotheism ; admittedly true.
- (2.) Its gradual development ; admittedly true.
- (3.) Its method of development ; each stage being due to a creative force from God ; probably true.

(C.) THE ORDER OF CREATION.

- (1.) The origin of the universe.
- (2.) The earliest state of the earth.
- (3.) Light created on first day.
- (4.) The Firmament, on second day.
- (5.) The Dry Land, } on third day.
- (6.) Vegetation, }
- (7.) The Sun and Moon, on fourth day.
- (8.) Fishes and Birds, on fifth day.
- (9.) Land Animals, } on sixth day.
- (10.) Man, }

(D.) CONCLUSION.

The accuracy of the narrative points to its having been Divinely revealed.

HAVING decided in the previous Part of this Essay on the Existence of God, and that it was credible

that He might make a miraculous Revelation to man, we pass on now to the *Jewish Religion*, which (as well as the Christian Religion) actually claims to be such a Revelation.

And the first argument we have to consider in its favour is that afforded by the opening chapter of Genesis. It is urged that this account of the Creation, no matter when or by whom it was written, must have been *Divinely revealed*, since it contains a substantially correct account of events which could not have been otherwise known at the time.

What then we have to examine is, whether this narrative is nearer the truth, as we now know it from geology and other sciences, than the unaided guesswork of a man ignorant of these sciences might be expected to be. Fortunately, in the ancient narratives of Babylonia, India, Persia, and elsewhere, we have abundant evidence as to how far from the truth such guesswork is likely to be. It is scarcely too much to say that they are one and all entirely false, except where they happen to agree with Genesis; while the latter is of course quite free from their absurd and grotesque elements.

And if we admit revelation at all, there is nothing improbable in some account of the creation of the world having been revealed to man very early in his history, and being accurately preserved by the Jews, while only distorted versions of it occur among other nations. Or else it might have been revealed to the Jews in later times, when it would naturally have incorporated the very small amount that was correct, in the accounts already known to them. And in any

- case, considering the common custom of worshipping the heavenly bodies, animals, etc., no subject could have been more suited for a first Revelation than the statement in simple language that all these were created by one supreme God.

(A.) THE DAYS OF CREATION.

And first we must consider somewhat carefully the meaning of the days of creation. Now, if the word *day* is used of a period of time, in Scripture as elsewhere, it has but two meanings—a period of twenty-four or of twelve hours. It is indeed often used in a vague indefinite sense as the *day of judgment* or the *day of the Lord*. But here there is no idea of duration, and we might just as well say the *hour* of judgment or the *time* of the Lord. In no case does the word *day* of itself denote a long period of time. And yet, on the other hand, ordinary days would have been impossible before the formation of the sun on the fourth day, and the writer must obviously have known this. Indeed, he implies it himself, since he expressly assigns the division of time into days and years to the sun.

How then are we to reconcile all this? The only satisfactory solution is that the word *day* must be understood as a *Representative Term*, relating to God. And therefore, God's *days* must be interpreted in the same manner as God's *eye* or God's *hand*; and this removes all difficulties. By a representative term is meant a term which is not, strictly speaking, true, but which *represents* the truth to man in such a way that he can to some extent understand it. For example, the phrase that God gained the victory *by His own right*

hand clearly means that He gained it not with the assistance of others, nor with the help of weapons, but simply by His own unaided inherent strength. It was such a victory as might *in a man* be described as gained by his own right hand. God's acts are thus represented under the figure of those acts of men which most nearly correspond to them in character. And on the same principle we interpret the passage, *The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers*, and hundreds of others which occur all through the Bible. We do not assign any new meaning to the actual words themselves, such as hands, eyes, and ears; but we say that all such terms, when applied to God, are mere descriptions drawn from human analogies, which cannot be pressed literally.

And in the present case it is extremely probable that the word *day* is to be understood in the same sense; for representative terms abound all through the narrative. From God's word of command calling forth light at the beginning to His rest at the end, everyone must admit that the expressions used are not, strictly speaking, true, but merely represent the truth about God in a way which man can understand. We have hence no more right to suppose the six days to be literal days than to suppose that God literally spoke or literally rested. What we are to suppose is that God created all things in such periods of time as might *to man* be most fitly represented by six days. Vast as the universe was, man was to regard it as being to God no more than a week's work to himself. In short, the time of creation, however long in itself, was utterly

insignificant in its relation to God ; to *Him* each stage was a mere day.

Further, if need be, to support this view, we may notice three points. The first is that it is not a purely modern theory, made to reconcile the narrative with science ; for the Greek Jew, Philo, born about B.C. 20, who knew nothing of geology, ridicules the idea of the days of Genesis being literal, or representing any definite periods of time.¹

Secondly, the Israelites quite understood that human measures of time, when applied to God, were not to be taken literally. Thus we are told that a thousand years in His sight are but as yesterday ; and elsewhere we read, “ Hast thou eyes of flesh, or seest thou as man seeth ? Are thy days as the days of man, or thy years as man’s days ? ”² Here *days* and *years* are applied to God in precisely the same manner as *eyes* and *seeing*, which everyone admits are representative terms only. Nor is the Fourth Commandment, that in *six days the Lord made Heaven and earth, etc.*, in any way opposed to this view. For *days* are not the only things it mentions, but also *work* and *rest*. And none will deny that God’s work is different from man’s work, and His rest from man’s rest ; so why should not the days of His work be also different from the days of man’s work ?

Lastly, there does not seem any reason why, if literal days were meant, a total of *seven* should have been selected, rather than eight or any larger number. For

¹ Works of Philo Judæus, Yonge’s translation, 1854, vol. i., p. 52.

² Ps. 90. 4 ; Job 10. 4, 5.

if the Creator only rested twenty-four hours, what did He do afterwards ? And if He continued to rest, would it not have been just as true to have selected a total of twelve days, and say that God worked for the first six and rested the second six ? On the other hand, if the days represent indefinite periods of time, the choice of seven is easily explained, since we are still in the seventh day or period, to which, be it remembered, no close, or *evening*, is assigned, and the Creator is still resting. And this is of course quite correct ; for nothing has occurred since the appearance of man, which requires any fresh creative act.

Any contradiction, then, between Genesis and geology as to the time of creation is plainly impossible ; for their teaching is of a different kind. The one tells us, or may tell us, the time of creation in regard to man, as measured by years and centuries ; the other tells us the insignificance of this time in regard to God. And therefore, as has been well said, there is only one way in which the discoveries of science can affect this subject. By the help of science we may obtain a truer conception of the real dimensions and marvellous constitution of the universe, a truer idea of the enormous lapse of ages during which it was being elaborated to its present perfection ; thus obtaining also a truer idea of the eternal greatness of *Him* to whom the whole of this vast work seemed but the labour of a few days.

(B.) THE PRINCIPLES OF CREATION.

We pass on now to some general principles which are stated or implied in the narrative, and which are of great importance.

- (1.) *Its pure Monotheism.*

And first as to its pure Monotheism. This alone renders it almost, if not quite, unique among similar narratives. According to the writer, the whole universe, including sun, moon, and stars, was all due to one *First Cause*. That this is strictly correct we have already shown in the earlier chapters of this *Essay*; and it may seem obvious enough now, but was it equally so when the narrative was written? Certainly not. For other ancient accounts are either *Pantheistic*, and confuse God with the universe; or else *Dualistic*, and assume two eternal principles of good and evil; or else *Polytheistic*, and make the universe the work of several gods. The Jewish writer, on the other hand, has kept clear of all these theories; and he is admittedly right and all the others wrong.

- (2.) *Its gradual development.*

Next, it must be noticed that, according to Genesis, the creation of the world was on the system of gradual development. God did not create a perfect universe all at once, but slowly built it up step by step. At first the earth was waste and void, and only after it had passed through several stages did it become fully ordered and peopled. Moreover, at every step (with two exceptions, the firmament and man, noticed later on), God surveyed the work and pronounced it *good*. He seems thus to have discerned a beauty and excellence in each stage; though it was not till the close of the whole work that He found complete satisfaction, and pronounced it all *very good*.

And here, again, the narrative seems quite correct.

For geology has shown conclusively that the formation and peopling of the earth was a gradual process, not accomplished all at once, but slowly step by step, through successive ages ; and also that those ages were of such magnitude and importance that we cannot regard them as mere preparations for man's coming, but as having a beauty and excellence of their own. Thus, according to science, though man is the highest member of creation, and though all evolution has tended to him as its final result, yet there were many earlier stages which well deserved the epithet *good*. But we may ask, how did the writer of Genesis know all this ?

(3.) *Its method of development.*

Now, how was this gradual development effected ? According to Genesis, the transition from each stage to the next was due to a *word of command* from God. This need not, of course, mean that certain words were audibly uttered, but that the kind of power God exerted could be least inadequately represented by the human word of command. The All-Mighty One had not to labour over His work, but could accomplish it all by a mere *word* ; each stage being due to what we may call a *special creative force*.

And once more science seems in agreement, for it is unable of itself to account for the *first* appearance of the various members of creation, such as plants, animals, and men. It is not, of course, disputed that these various stages were, or may have been, evolved from the previous ones, *e.g.*, the living from the not-living, which Genesis itself suggests in the words *and*

• *the earth brought forth grass*; and still more plainly when it speaks of *the generations of the heaven and of the earth*,¹ the word *generation* clearly implying some kind of organic descent, or evolution. What is disputed is, that this evolution took place merely under the influence of natural development, and without the further influence of a new creative force. And considering that all attempts to effect a similar transition *now* have failed hopelessly, it is not unreasonable to suppose that there was some other and special cause at work then.

Nor is it easy to see how some of the changes could have been otherwise effected. Take, for example, this very subject of the origin of life. As far as we know, the only natural mode in which life can begin is from a living parent, and yet there was a time when there were no living parents on this earth. How, then, could it originate, except by some process other than natural, *i.e.*, supernatural? Or, again, to take another instance, when the first *free being*, whether animal or man, appeared on this planet, a force totally different from all previous ones was introduced; and no natural process can bridge over the gulf which separates natural forces from free forces, since the latter are in their essence supernatural.

Anyhow, it must be admitted that a special creative force would adequately account for each of these steps in creation, and that science cannot account for them in any other way. In fact, science knows nothing as to what brought them about, and it therefore agrees,

¹ Gen. 2, 4.

as far as it can agree, with Genesis, which expressly assigns them to a Cause of which science could not possibly know anything. So here, as in other cases, the general principles of the narrative are either certainly or probably correct.

(C.) THE ORDER OF CREATION.

We pass on now to the detailed order of creation. It will be remembered that in Genesis, after describing the origin of the universe and the earliest state of the earth, there are eight acts of creation, two on the third day and two on the sixth; so we have altogether ten subjects to examine.

(I.) *The origin of the universe.*

'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.' It is, I believe, admitted on all sides that the Hebrew word for *created* does not necessarily mean created out of nothing; indeed, it is often used in places where it cannot possibly have this meaning,¹ so that the eternal existence of matter, as it is called, is left an open question by Genesis. And as the term *heaven and earth* is the common Hebrew one for the universe, little stress can be laid on *heaven* coming before *earth*. But if it means that the heaven was created first, it is almost certainly correct, as many suns and stars came into existence before our earth. Omitting, however, this doubtful point, it is clear from Genesis that the universe had an origin, and that this origin was due to God; and, as we have shown, science forces us to precisely the same conclusion.

¹ E.g., Ps. 102. 18; Isa. 54. 16; Ezek. 21. 30.

- (2.) *The earliest state of the earth.*

According to Genesis, taking the words in their obvious and natural sense, the earth was at first *waste and void* and in *darkness*, and apparently surrounded by *the waters*. And if we adopt the usual nebula theory, and refer this to the first period after it became a separate planet, and had cooled so as to be not self-luminous, the statements seem quite correct. For we know from geology that the earth was then waste and void as far as any form of life was concerned, while it was probably surrounded by a dense mass of watery vapours sufficient to produce darkness. Genesis then starts from the right starting-point, but again we must ask, how did the writer know this ?

- (3.) *Light.*

The first step in the development of the earth was, we are told, the introduction of *light* ; which in nature always includes *heat*. And this must obviously have come first, for on it depend all changes in temperature, the formation of winds, clouds, rain, and ocean currents ; while it also supplies the physical power needed for the life of plants and animals ; and therefore in placing *light* as the first step, Genesis is certainly correct.

Of course, the *source* of light at this early period was the remainder of the gaseous nebula from which our planet was thrown off ; so that it was diffused through an immense space, instead of being concentrated like that of our present sun ; and probably only reached the earth through a thick belt of clouds and vapours. But still as it was all on one side of the revolving earth,

there would be the alternations of light and darkness,* which are alluded to in the narrative, and which were previously unknown.

(4.) *The firmament.*

The next step was the separation of the waters above (the clouds) from the waters below (the seas), and placing between them a firmament or *expanse* (see margin), *i.e.*, *the atmosphere*. The idea that the writer thought this expanse meant a solid plane holding up the waters above (because it is perhaps derived from a word meaning firm or solid) is scarcely tenable. For the firmament was called 'Heaven,' and the upper waters, above the 'heaven,' must mean the sources from which the rain from heaven comes. And these sources are easily seen to be clouds, and no writer could have thought that a solid firmament intervened between the clouds and the earth; more especially as we read later on that birds are to fly in this firmament. And the omission, before noticed, to say that God saw that the firmament was *good*, is quite natural, if this means the (apparently) empty space separating the clouds from the seas; but it is difficult to account for, if it means any material object, which would seem to require God's approval like everything else.

And this view is further confirmed by the *symmetry* of the narrative, for the six days are divided into two groups of three each, the first set being clearly a sort of preparation for the second. Thus we have light on the first day, and the light-giving bodies, the sun and moon, on the fourth day; and we have land and vegetation on the third day, and animals and men,

who live on the land and feed on the vegetation, on the sixth day ; and therefore we should expect a similar agreement between the second and the fifth day. Now on the fifth day we have fishes that live in the water, and birds that fly in the air ; and if the work of the second day was, as just explained, the formation of the water, and the *air* (i.e., the firmament), then, and only then, is the symmetry perfect.

It may of course be objected to this view, that the sun and moon are said to have been *set in the firmament*, which is not, strictly speaking, correct if this means the atmosphere. But the writer could scarcely have meant it literally ; for anyone can see that they are not *set* at all, in the sense of being *fastened* to anything, as the moon keeps changing its position relatively to the sun, just as a rainbow does, which is also said to be *set* in the cloud.¹ Nor are they literally *in the firmament*, for anyone can see that the clouds (i.e., the waters above the firmament) are not, as a matter of fact, on the other side of the sun and moon, but frequently come in front of them. It may also be added that the English word *heaven* has a similar vagueness, for we speak of the clouds of heaven and the stars of heaven. On the whole, then, there can be little doubt that the firmament, or *expanse*, means the atmosphere ; and the order in which this is placed after light and before plants and animals is obviously correct.

(5.) *The dry land.*

We now come to an important point, the first ap-

¹ Gen. 9. 13.

pearance of dry land. According to Genesis, there was not always dry land on the earth ; the whole of it was originally covered by the waters. And turning to science, it seems probable that this was actually the case. The earth was originally surrounded by watery vapours, which gradually condensed and formed a kind of universal ocean. And then, when irregularities were caused in the surface, either by volcanic action or else by its contracting and crumpling up, the water would collect into the hollows, forming seas, and dry land would appear elsewhere. But how was it possible for the writer of Genesis to know all this ? There is nothing in the present aspect of nature to suggest that there was once a time when there was no *dry land* ; and if it was a guess on his part, it was, to say the least, a very remarkable one.

(6.) *Vegetation.*

We next come to the introduction of life ; which is placed in exactly its right position in the narrative. For vegetation requires four things : *soil, air, water,* and *light* including heat ; and these were precisely the four things which then existed.

The narrative, it will be noticed, speaks of *grass, herbs,* and *fruit-trees* ; and it seems to imply that these appeared simultaneously. But considering its general structure, which is that of a sequence of events, the other view, that they appeared successively, is at least tenable. This would mean that the vegetable life, which now began, gave rise to a long line of descendants, the three most important groups being specially mentioned. And the order in which these

Some agrees well with geology ; first *grass*, which apparently means here *seedless* vegetation (cryptogams), as seed is mentioned in regard to the other two, but omitted here ; then *herbs*, probably cereals and vegetables ; and lastly, *fruit-trees*. However, little stress can be laid on this, as the meaning of the Hebrew words is somewhat uncertain.

Before passing on, an apparent difficulty may be noticed, which is, that the series of plants and trees was not, as a matter of fact, complete before the following periods of creation. Some new species, for instance, were evolved long after the commencement of fishes and birds, and similarly some fishes and birds after the commencement of animals. But the difficulty is due to the fact that the various classes *overlap* to a large extent. And the order given in Genesis is far nearer the truth than any other order would be. Had the writer, for example, placed them fishes, birds, plants, animals ; or animals, fishes, birds, plants ; he would have been hopelessly wrong. As it is, by placing them plants, fishes, birds, animals, he is as near the truth as he can be, provided classes which really overlap have to be arranged in a consecutive narrative.

(7.) *The sun and moon.*

We next come to the formation of the sun and moon. The stars are also mentioned, but it is not said that they were made on the fourth day, and they are not alluded to in the opening command. Now, the alleged formation of the sun *after* that of light is undoubtedly the most striking point in the whole narrative, and was long thought to be a difficulty. Various explana-

tions, more or less forced, were suggested ; but they are happily no longer required. For science has now proved to almost a certainty that the statement of Genesis is strictly correct. However strange it may seem at first sight, light did undoubtedly exist long before the sun. In other words, the gaseous matter forming the original nebula of our solar system was luminous long before it contracted into a body with a definite outline and emitting such an intense and concentrated light, as could be called a sun.

And as a planet like the earth would cool and consolidate much quicker than the central mass, vegetation might take place here before the gaseous nebula had become a sun. This latter point is disputed by many geologists, but our knowledge is scarcely sufficient to enable us to speak with confidence either way. Though in any case as the earth was originally surrounded by dense clouds, due to the evaporation from its watery surface, the sun would probably not shine *on the earth* (which is what Genesis refers to) till this evaporation was reduced, owing to the appearance of the dry land and vegetation. And therefore the formation of the sun after light is certainly correct, and its formation or at least its not shining on the earth till after the dry land, and vegetation, probably correct.

And if it be urged that on this view the sun was not actually created on the fourth day, but had merely by that time sufficiently contracted to become a *great light*, and that Genesis ought to have implied this, the answer is obvious. It is precisely what Genesis has done. The original creation of the sun is described in verse 1 under

The term *Heaven*, and when on the fourth day we are told that God *made* two great lights, a different word is used, which means *appointed* rather than *created*, and is sometimes so translated.¹ This exactly agrees with what we now know to be true. The sun was originally created (or evolved) as a nebulous mass, and not till long afterwards did it contract so as to become the *great light* which we see at present.

Two objections have now to be considered. The first is, that the *moon* would consolidate before the earth, being smaller, and not after it like the sun. But when considered as *lights*, as they are in the narrative, it is quite correct to class the two together, since moonlight is only reflected sunlight; and, therefore, before the sun contracted so as to give out a powerful light, the moon could not have shone very brightly either. This is, of course, obvious to everyone now, but was it equally so when the narrative was written?

The second objection is, that according to Genesis, the earth seems to be the centre of everything, and even the sun, or at all events its light, is represented as existing solely for the sake of lighting the earth. Now no doubt the narrative takes for granted that the earth is the most important member of the solar system; but no objection can be taken to this, provided none of the statements are false, since as far as man is concerned—and the narrative was written for him alone—the earth undoubtedly is the most important member. And then as to the object of sunlight: we know that it is of use

¹ *E.g.*, 1 Sam. 12. 6.

to the inhabitants of this planet, and we do not know that it serves any other useful purpose whatever.

These, however, are but minor matters ; the important point, as before said, is that the writer of Genesis places the formation of the sun *after* that of light. This must have appeared when it was written, and for thousands of years afterwards, an obvious absurdity, since everyone could see that the sun was the source of light. We now know that it is correct. But is it likely that the writer of Genesis had any human means of knowing this ; or is it likely that, without such means, he should have made such a wonderfully lucky guess ? It seems hard to exaggerate the great improbability of either alternative ; and yet there is no other, unless we admit that the knowledge was divinely revealed.

(8.) *Fishes and birds.*

We next come to the introduction of fishes and birds. It is not clear whether the narrative means that they appeared simultaneously or successively, though here, as in other cases, the latter is the more probable. And it is needless to point out that science entirely agrees in thus placing fishes before birds and also in placing both of these after plants. Indeed, this latter point must be obvious to every naturalist, since the food of all animals is derived, either directly or indirectly, from the vegetable world. And Genesis is equally correct in emphasising the great *abundance* of *marine* life at this period, though, as far as we know, had the same been said of *birds* it would not have been correct ; and also in specially alluding to the great *sea-monsters*

(wrongly translated *whales* in A.V.), since these huge saurians were a striking feature of the time.

It should also be noticed that the narrative associates fishes and birds together, and separates them from land animals; and this, though by no means obvious, is also correct. For fishes and birds both produce their young in eggs; they move in a similar way, either by wings in the air or fins in the water; and their blood is practically the same, though this latter point was only discovered in modern times.¹ Land animals on the other hand are, with trifling exceptions, quite different in each of these important respects. But again we must ask, what was there to suggest to the writer of Genesis that birds more resemble fishes, which live in the water, than animals, which, like themselves, are air-breathers and live on the land?

But we now come to what is perhaps the most important argument against the accuracy of the narrative. It refers to *invertebrate* animals, which include an immense variety of creatures, ranging from sponges and corals up to insects and shell-fish; and where do these come in the narrative? Some would place them among the *moving creatures* brought forth by the waters; and others among the *creeping things* brought forth on the land. But in either case their position would be wrong, as invertebrate animals of some kind seem to have accompanied plants all along. The difficulty, however, is by no means insuperable, for neither of the above classes need include invertebrates. The former may refer to fishes alone, and the latter to

¹ Transactions of Victoria Institute, vol. ix., p. 119.

small animals. Why, then, may not invertebrates be omitted from the narrative? It never claims to describe everything that was created; and its extreme brevity, combined with the relative insignificance of these creatures, might well account for their being left out. And if so, the difficulty vanishes.

(9.) *Land animals.*

We next come to land animals, which apparently were produced from the earth, and not from previous forms of life. Science does not confirm this, though it shows that the order in which they are placed, after fishes and birds and before man, is quite correct. It is true that a few *marsupials* seem to have appeared as early as birds, but land animals as a whole undoubtedly succeeded them. Genesis, it will be noticed, divides them into three classes: *cattle* (domestic animals), *creeping things* (meaning doubtful),¹ and *beasts of the earth* (wild animals). But as these come in a different order in verses 24 and 25, perhaps due to some error in copying, it would be unsafe to found on them any argument either way. There is also a difficulty in verse 30, where *carnivorous* animals do not seem to be allowed for; though the writer, whoever he was, must certainly have known of them.

(10.) *Man.*

Last of all we come to the creation of man. This clearly means mankind or the human species, and not

¹ Two Hebrew words are used for these, one in Gen. 1. 24, and the other (evidently referring to the same creatures) in Gen. 7. 21. The latter is said in Lev. 11. 29 to include weasels, mice, and lizards; and small animals are probably intended here also, as they are mentioned between other animals.

a single individual, from the subsequent words, 'Let *them* have dominion.' Now this creation of man is represented as not only *subsequent in time*, and *distinct in nature*, but of an altogether *higher order* than any of the preceding ones; since it is not said that the earth brought forth a thinking animal, or anything of that kind, but that man was made (or evolved) in the *image of God*. This Divine likeness must of course depend not on any attribute, bodily or mental, which man shares with animals—for if so, they also would be in the image of God—but on some attribute which distinguishes man from the rest of creation. And yet, strange to say, the writer who assigns to man this unique character, with dominion over the whole of nature, does not give him, as we should have expected, a *day* to himself, but *links him with land animals* as both appearing on the sixth day. He thus represents man as having a certain relationship with animals, though being in part supernatural. And science agrees in all *five* points.

And first as to the time of man's appearance. Everyone now admits that this was not till towards the close of the Tertiary or most recent group of strata; and no animal can be shown to have appeared since then. Man was thus not only a late, but the very latest member of creation, which is precisely the position assigned to him in Genesis.

With regard to the actual date, the Bible says nothing; for its chronology only leads back to the creation of *Adam* in Chap. 2, and not to that of the *human species* in Chap. 1. And it is implied in other

places besides this, that there were pre-Adamite races of men. Thus we are told that Cain was afraid that whoever found him would slay him, and that he had a wife; though there is no hint that Adam had any daughters at that time, still less that one of them had been exiled with her brother and married him.¹ And some commentators have in consequence always maintained (long before geology was thought of) that Gen. 1. refers to a previous race of men.² We need not therefore discuss the difficulties connected with the story of Adam and Eve, as to which the present writer has never seen a satisfactory explanation.

Next, as to man being due to a distinct cause. We have already considered in Chapter IV. the enormous difference between animals and man. And though the first man may have been evolved from a previous ape, such a vast change, especially if it only occurred once in the world's history, seems to have required a special creative force. At all events, science cannot account for it in any other way.

Thirdly, this evolution involved not only a great development of existing faculties, but the introduction of an altogether new and higher faculty, the known possession of a *free will*, enabling man, on a small scale, both to design and to accomplish. This has been already shown to be the characteristic of man when compared with the rest of creation, so need not be further considered here. And it explains why man

¹ Gen. 4. 15-17, 26; 6. 2-4.

² E.g., I. Peyreyrius, A.D. 1655, quoted in the Speaker's Commentary.

•(unlike plants, animals, etc.) is not said to have been created *good*. For goodness in a free being must include moral goodness, or *righteousness*; and, as explained in Chapter VI., man could not possibly have been *created* righteous. He might have been created *perfect*, like a machine, or *innocent*, like a child, but to be *righteous* requires his own co-operation, his freely choosing to act right, though he might act wrong. No doubt he was made in a condition perfectly suited for the *exercise* of his free choice, but this seems included in God's final approval of the whole creation that it was all *very good*.

Fourthly, it will be remembered that the possession of a similar freedom, also able both to design and to accomplish, was shown in Chapters I. and II. to be the characteristic of the Deity, which distinguished His action from that of all natural forces. Scientifically, then, it is strictly true to say that man is made *in the image of God*, since the special attribute which distinguishes him from all else on this planet is precisely the attribute of God Himself. And when we consider the vast possibilities involved in the creation of such a being, able to act right or wrong, and therefore able, if he wishes, to act in opposition to the will of his Maker; thus bringing sin into the world with all its consequent miseries, there seems a peculiar fitness in the statement of Genesis that before taking such a momentous step, even the Creator paused to deliberate, *Let us make man*, which He had not done before.

It is also worth noting that no such expression as *after its kind*, which is so frequently used of plants and

animals, is applied to man ; for he is not one of a kind' in the same sense. Each man is *unique*, a separate personal being, distinct from all else in the world ; and not (like a tree, for instance) merely one example of a certain way in which molecules may be grouped.

While, lastly, science has rendered it abundantly clear that, in spite of all this, man in his physical nature is closely allied to land animals. And therefore the division in Genesis of fishes and birds on one day, and land animals and man on another, is more correct than the more obvious division of all animals on one day and man on another.

In dwelling on details like these, however, though many of them are sufficiently striking, there is a danger of forgetting the main features, which are briefly these. In Genesis there are three periods of life, each with a leading feature : that of the third day being vegetation ; that of the fifth day fishes and birds, special mention being made of great sea-monsters ; and that of the sixth day land animals, and at its close man. And the three great periods in Geology have just the same characteristics ; the Primary being distinguished by its vegetation (*e.g.*, the coal beds) ; the Secondary by its saurians, or great sea-monsters ; and the Tertiary by its land animals ; and at its close (now often called the Quaternary) by man. The harmony between the two is, to say the least, very remarkable.

(D.) CONCLUSION.

We have now examined in detail the account of creation given in Genesis, and have compared it as far as possible with the teaching of astronomy and geology ;

• and, as we have shown, it seems to be in substantial agreement all through. And this, it may be added, has been the opinion of some leading men of science. Thus Romanes once said, and as if the fact was undisputed, 'The order in which the flora and fauna are said, by the Mosaic account, to have appeared upon the earth corresponds with that which the theory of Evolution requires and the evidence of geology proves.'¹ We decide, then, that the order of creation, as given in Genesis, is in most cases certainly, and in all cases probably, correct.

And this is plainly of the utmost importance, for the points of agreement between Genesis and science are far too many and far too unlikely to be due to accident. They are far too many; for the chances against even eight events being put down in their correct order by guesswork is 40,319 to 1. And they are far too unlikely; for what could have induced an ignorant man to say that light came before the sun, or that the earth once existed without any dry land? Moreover, the general principles of the narrative, especially its pure Monotheism and its gradual development, are very strongly in its favour. While our admiration for it is still further increased by its extreme conciseness and simplicity. Seldom, indeed, has such a mass of information been condensed into as few lines; and seldom has such a difficult subject been treated so accurately, and yet in such simple and popular language.

Now what conclusion can be drawn from all this?

¹ *Nature*, 11th August, 1881.

There seem to be only two alternatives to choose from : either the writer, whoever he was, knew as much, or more, of science than we do, or else the knowledge was revealed to him by God. And if we admit revelation at all, the latter certainly seems the less improbable. We therefore conclude that this account of the creation was *Divinely revealed*.

CHAPTER IX.

THAT ITS ORIGIN WAS ATTESTED BY MIRACLES.

Great Importance of the Pentateuch ; it claims to have been written by Moses, and there is nothing unlikely in this.

(A.) THE EGYPTICITY OF THE PENTATEUCH.

This is very strongly in favour of its early date, as shown

- (1.) In the history of Joseph.
- (2.) In the history of Moses.
- (3.) In the laws and addresses.

(B.) THE LAWS OF THE PENTATEUCH.

These are also in favour of its early date, as shown by :

- (1.) Their subject-matter.
- (2.) Their relation to the history.
- (3.) Their relation to one another.
- (4.) Their wording.

(C.) THE LATE-DATE THEORY.

There are three chief arguments in favour of this, but they are not at all convincing :

- (1.) The language of the Pentateuch.
- (2.) The ignorance of its laws.
- (3.) The finding of Deuteronomy.

(D.) CONCLUSION.

The Pentateuch is, on the whole, a contemporary narrative ; and hence we must admit the miracles of the Exodus. Objection from there being no confirming evidence.

We pass on now to the *origin* of the Jewish Religion—that is to say, the events connected with the Exodus

from Egypt. And as the only account we have of these is contained in the *Pentateuch*, we must examine this book carefully. Is it a trustworthy, and, on the whole, accurate account of the events which it records? And this depends chiefly on its date. Is it a *contemporary* document, written by, or in the time of, Moses?

And it must be noticed at starting, that a large part of it distinctly *claims* to have been written by Moses. It is not merely that this title is given in a heading, or opening verse, which might easily be added in later times. But it is asserted, positively and repeatedly, all through the book itself, both in Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, that many of the events or laws referred to (often including several chapters) were actually *written down* by Moses. This is an important point, and it must not be forgotten.¹

Moreover, modern discoveries have shown conclusively that there is nothing in the *Pentateuch*, except the earlier chapters of Genesis, which might not have been written down as it occurred. For we now know that writing was in common use throughout Babylonia and Egypt centuries before the time of Abraham, and these were precisely the two countries with which the ancestors of the Jews had most to do. While at the time of the Exodus, Egypt was in such a civilised state, that it is practically certain that Moses, and the other leaders of Israel, could have written had they chosen. And as they somehow or other brought the people out of Egypt, it is extremely probable that

¹ Exod. 17. 14; 24. 4; 34. 27; Num. 33. 2; Deut. 31. 9, 22, 24.

they should have recorded it. But did they, and do we possess this record in the Pentateuch? This is the question we have to decide, and we will first consider what is called the *Egypticity* of the Pentateuch, and then its *laws*, both of which are very strongly in favour of an early date; then what can be said on behalf of the opposite, or *late-date* theory; and lastly, the *conclusion* to be drawn from admitting its genuineness.

(A.) THE EGYPTICITY OF THE PENTATEUCH.

And first as to the *Egypticity* of the Pentateuch. By this is meant that the part of the Pentateuch in which reference is made to Egyptian matters appears to be written with correct details throughout. This would of course be only natural in a contemporary writer acquainted with Egypt, but would be most unlikely for a late writer in Canaan. The evidence cannot of course be properly appreciated without some knowledge of ancient Egypt; but it is far too important to be omitted; so we will first consider it in regard to the history of Joseph, then in regard to that of Moses, and then in regard to the laws and addresses.

(1.) *In the history of Joseph.*

To begin with, there are three cases where it is often said that the writer seems *not* to have been a contemporary, since Egyptian customs are there explained, as if unknown to the reader. These are their eating at different tables from the Hebrews, their abhorrence of shepherds, and their habit of embalming.¹ But when

¹ Gen. 43. 32; 46. 34; 50. 3.

the context is examined, the inference from the first two will be seen to be very doubtful ; though that from the third is in favour of a late date.

On the other hand, there is abundant evidence in favour of a contemporary origin, in fact, nearly every point can be illustrated by ancient inscriptions. For instance, to take a single chapter,¹ we know that the Pharaohs attached great weight to *dreams*, and that they used to consult their *magicians* and *wise men* when in doubt, both these classes being often mentioned—and mentioned together—on the monuments. Moreover, the *details* of the dreams are peculiarly Egyptian. Cattle coming up out of the river and feeding on the *reed-grass* (an Egyptian word) was a common sight in that country, but must have been almost unknown in Canaan. In the same way *seven-eared wheat* seems to have been a product of Egypt, but is nowhere mentioned as grown in Canaan. We also know that there was an official called the Superintendent of the Bakery (*i.e.*, the *chief baker*), and that another had the same position in regard to the *Butlers*.

Next, when Joseph was hastily summoned to appear before Pharaoh, it is mentioned that he yet stopped to *shave*. To anyone familiar with ancient Egypt, nothing could be more natural than this, as the better class of Egyptians always shaved ; but to an Israelite, on the other hand, it would be most unnatural, as they always wore beards.² So, again, the custom of laying up corn in store-houses, to provide against the

¹ Gen. 41.

² 2 Sam. 10. 5.

frequent famines, and for taxation, was thoroughly Egyptian ; the Superintendent of the Granaries being a well-known official.

Moreover, we know that when foreigners rose to great importance in Egypt, they often adopted a *change of name* ; and that it was the custom to give a *signet ring*, and a gold collar (or *chain* about the neck) as a mark of royal favour. This bestowal of a gold collar was a peculiarly Egyptian custom, being called *receiving gold*, and is continually alluded to on the monuments. And Joseph's new name Zaphenathpaneah, as well as Asenath, and Potiphra, are all genuine Egyptian names, though (with the exception of Asenath) they have not at present been found as early as the time of Joseph. In short, everything in this chapter, (and it is but a sample of many others), is perfectly correct for Egypt, though much of it would be incorrect for Canaan.

And there is also evidence (indirect, but perhaps the more valuable on that account) that all this latter part of Genesis was actually written in Egypt. This is afforded by six passages, where, after the name of a place, is added some such phrase as *which is in Canaan*.¹ And yet there do not appear to be any other places of the same name liable to be confused with these. When then would it be necessary to explain to the Israelites that these places, Shechem, etc., were in Canaan ? Certainly not after the conquest, when they were living there, and it was evident to everyone ; so we must refer them to the time of the sojourn

¹ Gen. 23. 2, 19 ; 33. 18 ; 35. 6 ; 48. 3 ; 49. 30.

in Egypt. And this is strongly confirmed by a remark as to the *desert of Shur*, which lies between Egypt and Canaan, and which is described as being *before Egypt as thou goest towards Assyria*.¹ Clearly then this passage also must have been written in Egypt, since only to one living there would Shur appear on the way to Assyria.

And the same may be said, though less decisively, of some other passages, such as the strangely inverted order of first asking after a person's health, and then, if he is still alive.² This curious custom was thoroughly Egyptian, as some exactly similar cases have been found in a papyrus dated in the eighth year of Menephthah, generally thought to be the Pharaoh of the Exodus.³ But it is scarcely likely to have been adopted by a writer in Canaan, as it makes the narrative seem so ridiculous.

(2.) *In the history of Moses.*

Secondly, as to the history of Moses. His being exposed in an ark of *papyrus* smeared with bitumen was quite suited to Egypt, where both materials were commonly used, but would have been most unsuitable anywhere else. Again, we find the use of *straw* in brickmaking is alluded to, as is also the custom of reaping the corn *close to the ear*, so as to leave the bulk of the straw standing in the field as stubble.⁴ Both of these were undoubtedly Egyptian customs ; but, as far as we know, the Israelites in Canaan never made bricks

¹ Gen. 25. 18.

² Gen. 43. 27-28.

³ Chabas. *Mélanges Égyptologiques*, Third Series, vol. ii., Paris, 1873, p. 152.

⁴ Exod. 5. 7, 12.

with straw, while their method of reaping was to tie up the corn in sheaves instead of collecting it in baskets.¹

Next, as to the *Ten Plagues*. There is much local colouring here, and hardly one of them would have been suitable in Canaan. Moreover, the order in which they come is very significant. It is clear from the mention of stubble as still in the fields that the first interview of Moses with Pharaoh took place shortly after harvest-time, say May or June ; while the Exodus took place in the month Abib, which corresponds to our March and April. Hence we have nearly a year along which to distribute the plagues ; and it will be seen that they agree with the natural calamities of Egypt in a remarkable manner.

(1.) The water being turned into blood cannot, of course, be taken literally, any more than when Joel speaks of the moon being turned into blood.² It refers to the reddish discoloration of the Nile, which commences annually about the end of June, though it is not generally sufficient to kill the fish or render the water unfit to drink. And the incidental mention of *vessels of wood and stone*³ is interesting, as it was the custom in Egypt to *purify* the Nile water by letting it stand in such vessels ; and the writer evidently knew this, and took for granted that his readers knew it too. (2.) Frogs are most troublesome in September. (3.) Lice, perhaps mosquitoes or gnats, and (4.) flies, are unfortunately not confined to any one month, but are usually worst in October. (5.) Murrain among

¹ E.g., Gen. 37. 7.

² Joel 2. 31.

³ Exod. 7. 19.

the cattle and (6.) boils cannot be identified for certain, but their coming on just after the preceding plagues is most natural, considering what we now know, as to the important part taken by mosquitoes and flies in spreading disease. (7.) The particulars given in regard to the hail, that the barley was then in the ear, but the wheat not grown up, fix its date about the end of January, when severe hailstorms have been known in Egypt. (8.) Locusts are known to have visited Egypt terribly in March, which seems the time intended, as the leaves were then young. And they have sometimes been brought there by an *East* wind, and then driven back through the wind changing round, exactly as recorded in Exodus. (9.) The darkness *which might be felt* was probably due to the desert wind, which blows at intervals after the end of March, and sometimes brings with it such clouds of sand as to darken the atmosphere.¹ And curiously enough it often lasts for about three days, and moves in a narrow belt, so that the land may be dark in one place, and light in another close by. (10.) The death of the *Firstborn* was evidently not a natural calamity. But what is specially interesting is the statement *against all the Gods of Egypt I will execute judgments*, without any explanation being given of what is meant by this.² It refers to the Egyptian custom of worshipping *living* animals, the firstborn of which were

¹ I have noticed the same in the Transvaal, in particular a sand-storm at Christiana, on 20th Oct., 1900, which so darkened the sky that for about a quarter of an hour I had to light a candle.

² Exod. 12. 12 ; Num. 33. 4. See also Exod. 8. 26.

'also to die ; but this would only be familiar to a writer in Egypt, since, as far as we know, such worship was never practised in Canaan.

The agreement all through is most remarkable, and very suggestive of a contemporary date. And it explains to some extent the strange vacillation of Pharaoh in so often permitting, and then forbidding the Israelites to depart ; as he may have been told that something similar to all the plagues (except the last) had been known before, and that therefore they had not any real significance. How easily a late writer might destroy it by accidentally altering the order of the plagues is shown in Ps. 78 and 105 ; neither list agrees with the Pentateuch, and as little do they agree with each other.

(3.) *In the laws and addresses.*

And the same familiarity with Egypt is shown in the subsequent laws and addresses of the Pentateuch. Thus we read of laws being written on the doorposts and gates of houses, and on great stones covered with plaster, both of which were undoubtedly Egyptian customs ; and the latter was not, as far as we know, common elsewhere. Similarly the Egyptian habit of writing persons' names on sticks, was evidently familiar to the writer.¹ Then we have the curious custom of placing offerings of food *for the dead*, which was also very common in Egypt, probably because they embalmed their dead, and believed in their eventual return to life, and therefore placed some food in the tomb to be at hand when wanted. But here again, as far as we

¹ Num. 17. 2.

know, such a practice never prevailed among the Israelites.¹

Once more, the customary food of the people in Egypt is given as fish, cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic, all of which were commonly eaten there.² But as the Hebrew names of four out of the five vegetables do not occur elsewhere in the Bible, they could scarcely have been very common in Canaan ; while none of the characteristic productions of that land, such as honey, milk, butter, figs, raisins, almonds, and olives, are mentioned. The list is, as it ought to be, thoroughly Egyptian.

It must next be noticed that a large part of the *ritual worship* prescribed in the Pentateuch is obviously borrowed from Egypt. The most striking instance is that of the *ark*. A sacred ark is seen on Egyptian monuments centuries before the Exodus, and is sometimes shown as carried by poles resting on men's shoulders, and surmounted by winged figures something like the cherubim. Among other points most likely derived from Egypt are the Tabernacle ; the mercy-seat ; the dress and regulations for the priests, especially their only wearing *linen* garments, which seems to have been peculiar to Egypt ; the overlaying the ark with gold ; and many of the ornaments of the sanctuary. All this implies a lawgiver who knew Egypt remarkably well, and a people who knew it almost as well. How very suitable this would be for Moses, who was educated in Egypt, and for the Israelites, who had just come from there, scarcely

¹ Deut. 6. 9 ; 11. 20 ; 27. 2 ; 26. 14

² Num. 11. 5.

needs pointing out ; while, on the other hand, how unsuitable, if not impossible, it would be for a law-giver centuries afterwards in Canaan is equally clear.

And the *materials* said to have been used for this worship are precisely such as the Israelites might have then employed. The ark, for instance, was not made of oak, or cedar, or fir, as would have been the case in Canaan, but of acacia (*shittim*), which is very common near Sinai, though rarely used in Canaan. And the other materials were goats' hair, rams' skins, sealskins from the adjoining gulfs of the Red Sea, and gold, silver, brass, precious stones, and fine linen from the Egyptian spoils ; the latter evidently so, as an Egyptian word is used.¹ There is no anachronism anywhere, such as a late writer might have fallen into.

Moreover, in other places, the writer of the Pentateuch frequently assumes that his readers know Egypt as well as himself.² Thus the people are twice reminded of the *diseases* they suffered from in Egypt—'*the evil diseases of Egypt which thou knowest*' or '*which thou wast afraid of*'—and they are warned that if they misbehave, God will punish them with the same diseases again. But such a warning would have been quite useless many centuries later in Canaan ; just as it would be useless to warn an Englishman now of the diseases of Normandy, *which thou wast afraid of*, if this referred to some diseases our ancestors had before they left Normandy in the eleventh century.

¹ Exod. 25. 1-10.

² Deut. 7. 15 ; 28. 60 ; Exod. 23. 9.

Such words must clearly have been written soon afterwards. Similarly the people are urged to be kind to strangers, because *they knew the heart of a stranger*, seeing they had been strangers in the land of Egypt. And this again could scarcely have been written centuries after they left Egypt.

Elsewhere the writer describes the peculiarities of Canaan as to climate and productions; and with a view to their being better understood, he contrasts them with those of *Egypt*.¹ Obviously, then, the people are again supposed to know Egypt, and not to know Canaan. For instance, Canaan is described as a country of hills and valleys, and consequently of running brooks; and not like Egypt where they had to water the land with their *feet*. But no explanation is given of this. It probably refers to the *water-wheels*, which were necessary for raising water in a flat country like Egypt, and which were worked by men's *feet*. But can we imagine a late writer in Canaan using such a phrase without explaining it? On the other hand, if the words were spoken by Moses, all is clear; no explanation was given, because (for persons who had just come from Egypt) none was needed.

Lastly, the writer of the Pentateuch was evidently well acquainted with the Egyptian *language*. Nearly all the Egyptian names mentioned are accurate transcriptions of Egyptian words into Hebrew. Similarly the writer often uses Egyptian nouns or nouns common to both languages, several of them sometimes occurring

¹ Deut. 8. 7-10; 11. 10-12.

in a single verse ; *e.g.*, *ark*, *papyrus*, *bitumen*, *pitch*, *flags*, *brink*, and the *river*.¹ And as many of these words—the first four out of the above seven, for instance—are seldom, if ever, found in the Prophets when treating of Egyptian matters, we are justified in concluding that they are not only such as a writer in Egypt would have used, but are such as a writer in Canaan would not have used.

On the whole, then, it is plain that when Egyptian matters are touched upon in the Pentateuch, the most thorough familiarity with native customs, seasons, and language is everywhere displayed, though in many cases these are quite different from those of Canaan. Moreover, the evidence is never introduced ostentatiously, or as if the writer wished to display his knowledge, but it drops out incidentally, and in the most natural manner possible. And we therefore seem forced to conclude that the writer was a contemporary who lived in Egypt, and knew the country intimately ; and as we have shown, he evidently wrote for persons who had only recently come from there.

(B.) THE LAWS OF THE PENTATEUCH.

We pass on now to the Laws of the Pentateuch, which commence in the middle of Exodus, and occupy the greater part of the remaining books. And as we shall see, they also (quite apart from their references to Egypt) bear strong marks of a contemporary origin. Nor is there anything surprising in this, for the analogy of other ancient countries would lead us to

¹ Exod. 2. 3.

expect that the Israelites would have had an organised priesthood, with written laws at a very early time.

(I.) *Their subject-matter.*

In the first place several of the laws refer exclusively to the wilderness life of the Israelites ; and it is hence probable that they originated in the days of Moses. Among such laws may be mentioned those referring to the *Tabernacle* and its *furniture*.¹ It is obvious that we have here no mere description of the Tabernacle, but a set of working directions for its construction ; and if Moses received such instructions from God, that he should at once record them is most reasonable. And that to this should be added soon afterwards a precise account of their carrying out is equally so. But at no later time is this *double* record of instructions and fulfilment at all probable. Nor can these laws have been invented, as is sometimes alleged, merely as a pattern for the first or second Temple ; for what need was there to describe such things as curtains, loops, clasps, boards, tenons, sockets, bars, screens, hangings, pillars, hooks, fillets, and pins, if the end in view was a pattern for a stone temple ? And yet this is all given in detail twice over ; so a late date for any of these chapters is most improbable.

A similar argument applies to the laws regarding the *camp* and *order of march*.² Full particulars are given as to the exact position every tribe was to occupy, and how the Levites were to carry the Tabernacle. And what could be the object of inventing such laws in

¹ Exod. 25-28 ; 36-39.

² Num. 1. 47—4. 49.

later times, when, as far as we know, the Israelites never encamped or marched in this manner? In fact, they would have been of no more use after the people settled in Canaan, than laws concerning the Heptarchy would be at present. All these laws, then, amounting to over eleven chapters, must either have been of contemporary date, or else perfectly *useless*.

And the same may be said of the long and uninteresting list of the Journeys in the Desert ;¹ which certainly looks like an official record kept at the time. What possible object could there have been in inventing such a list centuries afterwards in Canaan? And yet if we admit its early date, it seems to involve that of other portions of the Pentateuch, for it merely summarises what is there more fully described.

Moreover, the subject-matter of many of the other laws, though applicable to Canaan, is strongly suggestive of an early date ; for the laws are of such a *public* character that the Israelites in later times could scarcely have ascribed them to Moses if, as a matter of fact, they had only just been invented, and were unknown to their forefathers. Take, for instance, the remarkable *land* law, that whoever bought an estate was to restore it to its original owner in the year of Jubilee, the price gradually decreasing according to the nearness of this year.² How difficult it must have been to *first* introduce such a law as this ! It would have revolutionised the whole community ; for some men would suddenly lose their possessions, and others be as

¹ Num. 33.

² Lev. 25. 13.

suddenly restored to theirs. And how could anyone in later times have made such a law, and yet assert that it had been in existence for centuries, though no one had ever heard of it ?

Or again, take the law regarding the *Levitical Cities*.¹ The Levites, it will be remembered, had no separate territory like the other tribes, but were given forty-eight special towns. And it is scarcely conceivable that such a curious arrangement could have been made at any time except that of the conquest ; still less that it could have been made centuries afterwards, and yet ascribed to Moses, without everyone at once declaring it to be spurious.

(2.) *Their relation to the history.*

It will next be noticed that the laws are not systematically arranged, but are closely related to the history. To begin with, as many as fourteen of them are actually *dated* either as to time or place. For instance, ' The Lord spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the first month of the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt, saying,' etc.² And several others are associated with the events which led to their enactment ; and these are often of such a trivial nature, that it is hard to imagine their being invented.³

Now, had the laws been the work of late writers, this is the last thing we should have expected ; the natural form for such writers to adopt being either

¹ Num. 35. 1-8.

² Num. 9. 1 ; Exod. 12. 1 ; Lev. 7. 38 ; 16. 1 ; 25. 1 ; 26. 46 ; 27. 34 ; Num. 1. 1 ; 3. 14 ; 33. 50 ; 35. 1 ; Deut. 1. 3 ; 4. 46 ; 29. 1.

³ Lev. 24. 15 ; Num. 9. 10 ; 15. 35 ; 27. 8 ; 36. 8.

separate commands or regular codes. A contemporary, on the other hand, would of course record the laws in connection with the events which gave rise to them, and at the times and places when they were issued; and this is precisely what we find in the Pentateuch. It shows, not a complete legislation, but one *in process of growth*, and of growth in intimate connection with the accompanying history.

And this is confirmed by the fact that in several places, especially in Deuteronomy, stress is laid on the people's *personal knowledge* of the events referred to; e.g., 'The Lord made not this covenant' (that at Horeb) 'with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day.'¹ Of course only persons over forty would have been born before the Exodus; but these elders would have been the ones addressed by Moses, and most of them would remember the striking events of their childhood.

Moreover, this personal knowledge is often appealed to as a special and chief reason for obeying the laws.² For instance, 'I speak not with your children which have not known, and which have not seen the chastisement of the Lord, . . . but your eyes have seen all the great work of the Lord which He did. *Therefore* shall ye keep all the commandments,' etc. Plainly this would have had no force in later times; indeed it would have furnished an excuse for *not* obeying the laws, since the people of those days had no personal knowledge of the events referred to. And is it likely, we may

¹ Deut. 5. 3; 24. 9, 18, 22; 25. 17.

² Deut. 11. 2-7; 4. 3-15; 29. 2-9.

ask, that a late author, who falsely ascribed his laws to Moses, in order to get them obeyed, should yet put into the mouth of Moses himself an excuse for not obeying them ?

It is also worth noting in this connection how much Moses relies on his own *personal authority* in issuing the laws, especially those in Deuteronomy. The later prophets always speak in God's name, and such expressions as *Thus saith the Lord*, *Hear ye the word of the Lord*, are extremely common, occurring over 800 times ; but in the laws of the Pentateuch nothing of the kind is found. They are delivered by Moses in his own name, often with the simple words, *I command thee*, which occur thirty times in Deuteronomy. And, of course, if the laws are genuine, there is nothing surprising in this, for forty years' sole leadership might well have induced Moses to adopt such a peremptory tone. But a late author, afraid of writing in his own name, would scarcely have adopted a style so different from that of all the other prophets.

(3.) *Their relation to one another.*

Now the laws profess to have been delivered mainly at two periods—near the beginning and at the end of the forty years' wanderings. And, it will be seen, the difference between the two sets of laws exactly corresponds to such a difference in date. To begin with, the laws referring to the Tabernacle, the camp, and some temporary duties of the Levites, are of course peculiar to the earlier group ; as are also numerous ceremonial and ritual laws, which would have been out of place in Deuteronomy, as that was addressed to the laity. On

the other hand the laws as to the division of Canaan among the tribes, the possession of lands and houses, and the appointment of a successor to Moses, naturally belong only to the later group. Among other additions are the laws referring to apostasy among the Israelites, and the admission of foreigners to the nation, both of which might be required when they became settled in Canaan.

In some cases, however, though the same laws occur in both groups, there are certain differences between them. The most important concerns the duties of Priests and Levites. In Leviticus and Numbers the tribe of Levi is divided into two parts; the sons of Aaron being *Priests*, and the rest of the tribe *Levites*. But in Deuteronomy, it is urged, this distinction is unknown; the priests are never called sons of Aaron, but are called Levites; while, on the other hand, Levites are allowed to perform priestly duties. In answer to this it must be noticed, that as Aaron was himself a descendant of Levi, all priests were, as a matter of fact, Levites. And the writer of Deuteronomy was quite able to distinguish between them when necessary; for in Deut. 18. 1-8 the first two verses are said to refer to the *whole tribe*, the next three to the *priests*, and the last three to the *Levites*. The only difference, then, that exists is that Deuteronomy seems to recognise that Levites might perform priestly duties. But, with the doubtful exception of the above three verses, there is not a single passage in which distinctively priestly duties are assigned to those distinctively called Levites. All that we find is that

where the whole tribe is referred to, the various duties are named together.¹

In other cases the differences are as a rule trivial, and they often tend to prove the genuineness of the laws. Take for instance the *slaughter of animals*.² In Leviticus every ox, sheep, or goat intended for food was to be first brought to the Tabernacle as a kind of offering, and there killed. But in Deuteronomy those living at a distance were to be allowed to kill and eat at home. The first obviously suits the circumstances of the desert, when everyone was near the Tabernacle, and the latter those of Canaan, when some were near and many at a distance. Moreover, the passage in Deuteronomy begins *If the place, etc.*, which implies some previous law on the subject. And it also implies that the gazelle and hart were not included in this law, precisely as we find them not included in Leviticus. Thus the apparent discrepancy is more like an undesigned agreement between the laws, the later one implying the existence of the earlier, which had now to be modified to make it suitable to Canaan.

And exactly the same may be said as to the *list of clean and unclean animals*.³ Leviticus includes among clean animals, which might be eaten, four kinds of locusts, and among unclean animals, which might not be eaten, eight creeping things, such as the weasel, mouse, and lizard, all of which Deuteronomy omits. On the other hand, the latter mentions several animals,

¹ E.g., Deut. 10. 8. ² Lev. 17. 1-7; Deut. 12. 21, 22.

³ Lev. 11; Deut. 14.

such as the ox, sheep, and hart, which the former omits. Plainly, then, when Leviticus was written there was a lack of animal food, which might tempt the people to eat locusts (permitted), or even mice and lizards (forbidden) ; while when Deuteronomy was written animal food was plentiful, and regulations as to these were wholly unnecessary. Thus the differences in the laws again correspond precisely to the different conditions of the people at the two periods.

In each of these cases, then, and they are only samples of several others, we have but two alternatives to choose from. Either the differences result from the fact that the laws date respectively from the times they profess to, when all is plain and consistent ; or else they must be due to the carefully planned work of some late writer ; in which case, while we admire the skill with which the fraud is executed, we cannot help wondering at its utter uselessness. Why indeed was it necessary to invent two sets of laws at all ? Surely one complete code would have been better from every point of view ? The only motive, then, that late writers could have had in inventing a double code was to give the laws an air of genuineness. And if this was their object, it must be allowed that they have thoroughly succeeded.

(4.) *Their wording.*

Lastly we have to consider the *wording* of the laws, and this also is strongly in favour of a contemporary origin. Thus, as many as sixteen of them, which have special reference to Canaan, are introduced with some such phrase as *when ye be come into the land of*

Canaan,¹ which plainly supposes that the people were not there already. And it is a phrase which would soon have dropped out had the laws been merely handed on traditionally, and not written down at the time. And the same may be said of numerous other laws, which the people are told to obey when they enter into Canaan; or are even exhorted to obey in order that they may enter into Canaan, both of which again imply that they were not there already.²

Moreover, many of the laws refer to the *camp*, and sometimes to *tents*, in such a way as to imply that the whole life and worship of Israel was carried on in a camp.³ These laws were, with some necessary modifications, as binding in Canaan as in the wilderness; so there was no reason to refer to the camp here, except the most natural one that they were actually issued in the camp, and were consequently adapted in their language to camp-life.

The wording, then, of all these laws bears unmistakable signs of contemporary origin. Of course, these signs may have been inserted at a later time to give subsequent laws a Mosaic air, but they cannot be explained in any other way. And therefore the laws must be either contemporary, or *deliberate frauds*. No innocent mistake in ascribing old laws to Moses, such as the Athenians may have made in ascribing theirs

¹ Exod. 12. 25; 13. 11; Lev. 14. 34; 19. 23; 23. 10; 25. 2; Num. 15. 2, 18; 35. 10; Deut. 7. 1; 12. 1, 10, 29; 17. 14; 18. 9; 26. 1.

² Deut. 4. 1, 5, 14; 5. 31; 6. 1, 18; 8. 1; 11. 8, 23.

³ *E.g.*, Exod. 29. 14; Lev. 4. 12; 6. 11; 13. 46; 14. 3; 16. 26; 17. 3; Num. 5. 2; 19. 3, 14.

to Solon, can possibly explain such language as this ; either it was the natural result of the laws being genuine, or else it was adopted on purpose to mislead.

Nor is the difficulty got over by saying that the laws date from very different times ; and that perhaps the last compiler, who may have lived at the time of the Exile, did not invent any laws himself, but merely selected and arranged previous ones. For shifting the difficulty does not remove it. Each individual law, if it falsely *claims* to date from before the conquest of Canaan (and, as we have seen, numbers and numbers of laws do so claim, *When ye be come into the land of Canaan*, etc.), must have been invented by *someone* ; and this someone, though he really wrote it after the conquest of Canaan, must have inserted these words to make it appear that it was written before.

Practically, then, as just said, there are but two theories to choose from—that of genuine Mosaic laws and that of deliberate frauds. And bearing this in mind, we must ask, is it likely that men with such a passion for truth and righteousness as the Hebrew prophets—men who themselves so denounced lying and deception in every form¹—should have spent their time in composing such forgeries ? Could they, moreover, have done it so *skilfully*, as the laws contain the strongest, and most subtle, marks of genuineness ; and could they have done it so *successfully* as never to have been detected at the time ? This is the great *moral* difficulty in assigning these laws to a later age, and to many it seems insuperable.

¹ Jer. 8. 8 ; 14. 14 ; Ezek. 13. 7.

We have now concluded a brief examination of the laws of the Pentateuch, and however we regard them, they have every appearance of dating from the time of Moses. Moreover the whole of the evidence is of such a kind that the ordinary reader can judge of its value. Anyone who likes to look out the texts for himself can form an independent opinion as to how extremely improbable it is that laws *such as these* should have been invented in after times. We have thus two *very strong* arguments in favour of an early date for the Pentateuch : the one derived from its *Egypticity*, and the other from its *laws*.

(C.) THE LATE-DATE THEORY.

We pass on now to the opposite, or *late-date* theory. According to this the Pentateuch, though it no doubt contains older traditions, and perhaps fragments of older documents, was in the main not written till many centuries after the death of Moses. And the three chief arguments in its favour are based on the *language* of the Pentateuch, the apparent *ignorance of its laws* in later times, and the *finding of Deuteronomy* in the reign of Josiah ; and we will examine each in turn.

(I.) *The language of the Pentateuch.*

Now in general character the language of the Pentateuch undoubtedly resembles that of some of the Hebrew prophets, such as Jeremiah ; and therefore it is assumed that it must date from about the same time. But unfortunately critics who maintain this view do not admit that we have *any* genuine Hebrew documents of a much earlier date, with which to compare it. And

therefore we have no means of knowing how much the language altered, so this of itself proves little ; while the Pentateuch contains many hundreds of words peculiar to itself.

But it is said we have two actual *signs of late date*. The first is that the common word for *west* in the Pentateuch really means *the sea*, and hence, it is said, the writer's standpoint must have been that of Canaan, and the books must have been written after the settlement in that country. But the fallacy here is obvious. In all probability this word was adopted in the Hebrew language before the time of Abraham, when the sea, *i.e.*, the Mediterranean, actually was to the west. And in later years a Hebrew, writing in Egypt or anywhere else, would naturally use the word, without thinking that it was inappropriate to that particular place. The other expression is *beyond Jordan*, which is frequently used to denote the *eastern* bank ; and hence again, it is urged, the writer's standpoint must have been that of Canaan. But this is also untenable. For the same term is used for the *western* bank in several places,¹ and sometimes of both banks in the same chapter.² And therefore no inference as to the position of the writer, and hence as to the date of the book, can be drawn from either of these expressions.

On the other hand, there are several *signs of early date*, for the Pentateuch contains a variety of archaisms.

¹ *E.g.*, Deut. 11. 30 ; Josh. 12. 7.

² *E.g.*, eastern in Deut. 3. 8 ; Josh. 9. 10 ; and western in Deut. 3. 20, 25 ; Josh. 9. 1.

Of course, most of these can only be understood by a Hebrew scholar (which the present writer does not profess to be) ; but this is the less to be regretted, because, I believe, the fact is undisputed. We will therefore give a couple of examples only, which are plain to the English reader. The pronoun for *he* is commonly used throughout the Pentateuch (including Deuteronomy) both for male and female ; while in the later writings it is confined to males, the females being expressed by a derived form which is very seldom used in the Pentateuch. Similarly, the word for *youth* is used in the Pentateuch for both sexes, though afterwards restricted to males only, the female being again expressed by a derived form. These differences, though small, are very significant, and they clearly show that the language was at a less developed, and therefore earlier, stage in the Pentateuch than in the rest of the Old Testament.

It is, however, further urged in support of the *late-date* theory that the language of the Pentateuch, when carefully examined, shows that it had several authors ; as the same words, or groups of words, occur in different passages all through the book. And this, combined with slight variations of style, and other peculiarities, have led some critics to split up the book into a number of different writings, which they assign to a number of unknown writers from the ninth century B.C. onwards. For instance, to take a passage where only three writers are supposed to be involved, Exod. 7. 14-25. These twelve verses seem to the ordinary reader a straightforward narrative, but they have

been thus split up.¹ Verses 19, 22, and parts of 20, 21, are assigned to P, the supposed writer of the Priestly Code of Laws ; v. 24 and parts of 17, 20, 21, to E ; and the remainder to J ; the two latter writers being thus named from their generally describing the Deity as *Elohim* and *Jehovah* (translated *God*, and *Lord*) respectively.

Fortunately, we need not discuss the minute and complicated arguments on which all this rests, for the Pentateuch, as we have seen, has strong claims to a *contemporary* origin. And if so, it matters little whether it was the work of one or more writers ; though the idea of their writings being so hopelessly intermixed seems in any case to be most improbable. And there are at least two plain and simple arguments against it.

The first is that the so-called *Egypticity* of the narrative extends to all the parts J, E, and P ; as well as to Deuteronomy, which these critics assign to a different author again. And while it is difficult enough to believe that even one writer in Canaan should have possessed this intimate knowledge of Egypt, it is far more difficult to believe that *several* should have done so.

The second is that parallel passages to the supposed two narratives of the Flood, ascribed to J and P (and which are thought to occur alternately *nineteen* times in Gen. 7.-8.) have been found *together* in an old Babylonian story of the Flood, centuries before the time of Moses ; and also in layers corresponding to

¹ Driver's Introduction to Literature of Old Testament, sixth edition, 1897, p. 24.

J and P ; and this of course makes the theory still more unlikely. For then we must assume that J first got hold of this Babylonian story, and appropriated certain portions of it, freeing it from its absurd and polytheistic elements ; that some time later P did the same, choosing, however, *other* portions of the story, and that long afterwards these two narratives were combined together again in our Genesis ; and all this is, to say the least, very improbable.¹

Of course no one denies that Moses may, and probably did in some cases avail himself of previous documents, one of these, ' The Book of the Wars of the Lord,' being quoted in Num. 21. 14, and others are doubtless included in the narratives of Genesis, as indeed they must be, if these are in any sense contemporary history. While quite recently (1902) it has been found that some of the *laws* are also much older than Moses ; as they occur (with slight differences) in the code of Hammurabi of Babylon, probably the Amraphel of Gen. 14.

Nor on the other hand can it be denied that some *additions* have been made to the Pentateuch since the time of Moses.² The most important is the list of Edomite kings, who are said to have reigned *before there reigned any king over the children of Israel*, which brings the passage down to the time of Saul at least. But it is probably a later insertion, since the dukes of Edom mentioned in vv. 40-43 seem naturally to follow those of Seir

¹ Sayce's Monument Facts, 1904, p. 20 ; Driver's Book of Genesis, 1905, pp. 89-95, 107.

² Gen. 36. 31-39 ; 12. 6 ; 13. 7 ; Exod. 16. 36.

in vv. 29, 30 ; as they are referred to in a similar manner and not like the intervening kings. There are also two passages referring to Abraham, after which it is added *the Canaanite was then in the land*. This was plainly to prevent anyone thinking that the country was then uninhabited ; and the notes must therefore have been written after the conquest of the land by Joshua. But they also appear to be subsequent additions ; and if so, this would point to an earlier date for the original narrative, which was written when such explanations were thought unnecessary. And exactly the same may be said as to the note on the *omer*, that it is the *tenth part of an ephah*. This was evidently a later addition, when the *omer* had fallen into disuse and needed explanation.

With regard to these and other slight additions,¹ it must be remembered that it was the custom in ancient times for notes on a previous document to be incorporated in the text, and not put at the bottom of the page, or at the end of the book, as at present. And, hence, adding such notes did not imply any deception on the part of the subsequent editor ; he was merely trying to make the original sense more easily understood ; and they may all be omitted without breaking the continuity of the narrative. It thus differs altogether from composing a whole document, and falsely ascribing it to some earlier writer, which would entirely destroy our confidence in it. Indeed, on the *late-date* theory, it is difficult to see how the Pentateuch can have any historical value whatever.

¹ Deut. 2. 10-12, 20-23 ; 3. 14 ; 33, 34.

(2.) *The ignorance of its laws.*

Passing on now to the next argument for a late date, it is urged that the laws of the Pentateuch cannot really have been written by Moses, since, judging from the other Old Testament Books, they seem to have been *unknown* for many centuries after his time. And the evidence adduced in support of this is the *silence* of early writers as to these laws, and the observance of practices *inconsistent* with them.

But with regard to the former, none of the earliest books, either historical or prophetic, are really *silent* as to the laws, though they do not allude to them as often as we might think probable. The first of the *historical* books is Joshua ; but this, though it expressly refers to written Mosaic laws,¹ cannot be appealed to as an independent witness, since hostile critics believe that it forms one work with the Pentateuch, so the two earliest books are Judges and 1 Samuel.

In Judges the references are admittedly few,² which is not perhaps surprising considering the unsettled state of the country ; but in 1 Samuel they are much more numerous, the first six chapters alone supplying over a dozen points of agreement.³ And so in regard to the *prophetic* books. Two of the earliest of these are Hosea and Amos, and they both contain numerous references, one of which is to *written* laws.⁴

All this is abundant evidence as to the existence of some law and ritual very like what we now find in

¹ Josh. 1. 7, 8, 13 ; 24. 26. ² Judges 18. 31 ; 20. 27, 28 ; 21. 19.

³ 1 Sam. 1. 3, 24 ; 2. 12-30 ; 3. 3 ; 4. 4 ; 6. 15.

⁴ Hos. 2. 11 ; 3. 4 ; 4. 4-6 ; 6. 6 ; 8. 1, 12, 13 ; 9. 4 ; 12. 9 ; Amos 2. 4, 11 ; 4. 4, 5 ; 5. 21-25 ; 8. 5.

the Pentateuch. And though many of the references are of a disparaging nature, this very fact that the prophets found it necessary to protest against ritual being placed above morality shows not only that the ritual then existed, but that it was believed to have had a Divine origin, which they themselves imply in some cases. And similar evidence is afforded by most of the other prophets, and also of course by the later historical books, David, for instance, alluding to the *written* law of Moses, and as if it was well known.¹ Moreover, the references are all *incidental*. The writers nowhere give a list of Mosaic laws; the allusions to them turn up, as it were, by accident; and this makes it almost certain that many other laws must have been equally well known without being alluded to at all.

The chief counter-argument is from the statement in Jeremiah, that God did not command the Israelites concerning burnt-offerings and sacrifices when He brought them out of the land of Egypt.² But the context certainly implies that it was placing these before obedience that God condemned; and Hosea in a similar passage declares this to be the case, and that God's not desiring sacrifice means His not caring so much about it, as about other things (I desire mercy and *not* sacrifice, and the knowledge of God *more than* burnt offerings). Both passages are mere echoes of the older saying, *To obey is better than sacrifice*.³

With regard to the *inconsistent practices*, the most important of these were the sacrifices not being confined

¹ 1 Kings 2. 3. ² Jer. 7. 22. ³ Hosea 6. 6; 1 Sam. 15. 22.

to one place, and their being offered by laymen, as well as some minor points, such as the erection of pillars. As to the former, the principle of both the earlier and later laws was that the place of sacrifice should be of Divine appointment, *where Jehovah had chosen to record His name*, and not selected by the worshippers themselves.¹ In Exodus it is naturally implied that there should be many such places, as the Israelites were then only beginning their wanderings ; and in Deuteronomy that there should be only one, as they were then about to settle in Canaan.

Now, the manner in which this place was made known was by the presence of the ark : wherever the ark was, there was the tabernacle, and the place for Divine worship. And hence when the ark was in the hands of the Philistines, the law could not be obeyed. But as soon as it was recovered, the law again assumed its authority, and the sanctuary at Jerusalem was the only one recognised. In later times, no doubt, the worship at *high places* was contrary to the law ; but this is mentioned as a *sin*, and Hezekiah is specially commended for removing these places, and for keeping the commandments *which the Lord commanded Moses*.²

The recent discovery, however (1907), that there was a Jewish Temple of Jehovah at Syene in Egypt, with sacrifices, as early as the sixth century B.C., and that it had the full approval of the authorities at Jerusalem, makes it doubtful if the law as to the one sanctuary was ever considered to be absolutely binding.

¹ Exod. 20. 24 ; Deut. 12. 5.

² 1 Kings 3. 2 ; 22. 43 ; 2 Kings. 18. 4-6.

THE EXODUS.

Indeed, Deuteronomy itself recognises that there may be *exceptions* to the rule, as it authorises an altar on Mount Ebal on one occasion.¹ -

The second practice, that of laymen offering sacrifices, can generally be explained by the simple rule that acts done by subordinates are often ascribed to their superiors. Thus, at the dedication of the Temple, Solomon is said to have offered 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep, though they cannot have been offered with his own hands. Similarly, when David and Solomon are said elsewhere to have offered sacrifices, we may fairly assume that, as a rule, they only provided and ordered them, the actual ministers being doubtless priests. There are, it is true, some instances where the above explanations do not apply, such as those of Gideon, Samuel, and Elijah. But these were all under special and exceptional circumstances, and in some of them the offering of sacrifice was directly enjoined by God.² Thus the so-called *ignorance of the laws* in later days is nothing like sufficient to show that they were not then in existence ; it merely shows that they were often not obeyed.

(3.) *The finding of Deuteronomy.*

Lastly we have the finding of the *Book of the Law* (probably Deuteronomy) when the temple was being repaired in the reign of Josiah, about B.C. 621, and which is of course regarded by some critics as its first publication.³ But this is a needless assumption, for there is no hint that either the king or the people were surprised at such a book being found, but only at what

¹ Deut. 27. 5-7.

² E.g., Judges 6. 26.

³ 2 Kings 22.

it contained. And as they proceeded at once to carry out its directions, this seems rather to show that they knew there was such a book all the time, only they had never before read it. And this is easily accounted for, as most copies would have been destroyed by the previous wicked kings Manasseh and Amon. On the other hand, the new invention of a hitherto unsuspected law-book could scarcely have gained such immediate and ready obedience. Nor is it easy to see why, if Deuteronomy was invented at that time, it should have contained so many obsolete and useless instructions; such as the order to destroy the Canaanites, when there were no Canaanites left to destroy; and still less how it could have been twice quoted in the previous history.¹

On the whole, then, none of these arguments for a *late date* can be looked upon as at all conclusive, and we therefore decide that this theory is not only very improbable in any case, but quite untenable in face of the strong evidence on the other side.

(D.) CONCLUSION.

Having now shown that the Pentateuch appears to date from the time of Moses, it matters little as to who was the actual writer, though that the greater part should have been written by Moses himself is plainly the most probable view. And as we have seen, this is positively asserted in the book itself. Moreover his frequent references to his own exclusion from Canaan, and his pathetic prayer on the subject, seem to have a very genuine tone about them.² And so have some

¹ Deut. 20. 17; 1 Kings 11. 2; 2 Kings 14. 6; Deut. 7. 3-4; 24. 16.

² E.g., Deut. 3. 23-26; 1. 37; 4. 21; 31. 2.

individual remarks when carefully considered ; such as that Moses '*looked this way and that way*' before slaying the Egyptian. Who but one, who vividly remembered the incident, would have thought it worth noting that he took such an obvious precaution ? And would anyone else (especially in later days) have put into his mouth the bitter complaint that God had broken His promise, and not delivered the people ?¹

And his authorship is further confirmed by the fact that so little is said in his praise. His faults are indeed narrated quite candidly, but nothing is said in admiration of the great leader's courage, ability, and character, till the closing verses of Deuteronomy. These were evidently written by someone else, and show what we might have expected had the earlier part been the work of anyone but Moses himself. Nor is there anything surprising in his writing in the third person, as numbers of other men—Cæsar, for instance—have done the same.

But now comes the important point. If the Pentateuch is a contemporary document, can we reject the miracles which it records ? Can we imagine, for instance, a *contemporary* writer describing the Ten Plagues, or the Passage of the Red Sea, if nothing of the kind had occurred ? The events, if true, must have been public, notorious, and well known at the time ; and if untrue, no contemporary would have thought of inventing them. While, if they were true, it matters little whether they were evidential miracles in the strict sense, or whether, as is more likely, they were what we have called **superhuman coincidences**.

¹ Exod. 2. 12 ; 5. 23.

Many of the *Ten Plagues*, for instance, probably belonged to this latter class ; but their coming on with such unprecedented violence, and in each case immediately following the words of Moses, could not have been due to accident.

Similarly in regard to the *Passage of the Red Sea*. The water, we are told, was driven back by a strong east wind, lasting all night ; and this was doubtless due to natural causes, though, in common with other natural events, it is in the Bible ascribed to God. And the statement, *the waters were a wall unto them*, need not be pressed literally, as meaning that the waters stood up vertically ; it may only mean here (as it obviously does in some other cases), that the waters were a defence on each side, and secured them from flank attacks.¹ And as, considering their immense numbers, they must have advanced in several parallel columns, probably half a mile wide, this certainly seems the more likely view.

And what makes it still more probable is that much the same thing occurred in this very neighbourhood in recent times. For in January, 1882, a large expanse of water, about 5 feet deep, near the Suez Canal, was subjected to such a strong gale from the east (the very direction mentioned in Genesis), that next morning it had been entirely driven away, and men were walking about on the mud, where the day before the fishing-boats had been floating.² Moreover, on this theory, the

¹ Exod. 14. 21, 22 ; Nahum 3. 8 ; 1 Sam. 25. 16.

² Transactions of Victoria Institute, vol. xxviii., p. 268. It is vouched for by Major-General Tulloch, who was there on duty at the time.

miracle would not lose any of its evidential value, since the fact of such a strip of dry land being formed just when and where the Israelites so much wanted it, and then being suddenly covered again, through the wind changing round to the west (which it must have done for the dead Egyptians to have been cast up on the *east* side)¹, would be a coincidence far too improbable to be accidental.

The *immense number* of the Israelites just alluded to, some 600,000 men, besides women and children,² or probably over two million altogether, is no doubt a serious difficulty ; as anyone can see, who will take the trouble to calculate the space they would require on the march, or in camp. If we assume, for instance that they crossed the arm of the Red Sea in, say, *forty* parallel columns, these would still have to be of enormous length to contain 50,000 persons each, with their flocks and herds. And the whole narrative is opposed to such huge, unwieldy masses. Most critics are consequently of opinion that the number has, somehow or other, got exaggerated. This has certainly been the case with some other numbers in the Old Testament (see Chapter X.), and it would afford the most obvious solution, but for the detailed censuses in Num. 1. and 26., each of which totals up to about 600,000 men.

Perhaps the best explanation is that recently suggested by Professor Flinders Petrie, that the word translated *thousands* should be *families* ;³ so that the tribe of Reuben, for instance,⁴ instead of having forty-six

¹ Exod. 14. 30.

² Exod. 12. 37.

³ *Expositor*, Aug., 1905.

⁴ Num. 1. 21.

thousand five hundred men, would have forty-six *families*, (making about) five hundred men. The chief arguments in favour of this are, first, that the same word is used in Judges 6. 15, where it so obviously means family and not thousand, that it is so translated in both the Authorised and Revised Versions ; and secondly, that the number of men in a family, on this supposition, always works out to a reasonable proportion, allowing for servants, from five to seventeen. This is of course due to the number given for the *hundreds* never being 0 or 1, which would work out too few ; or 8 or 9, which would work out too many ; but always one of the six other digits. And as there were two censuses, with twelve tribes in each, the chance of this occurring every time, if the figures were an ordinary census (when any one digit would be as likely as any other), would be $(\frac{1}{10})^{24}$, or less than 1 in 200,000. On this theory the total number of fighting men would be reduced to about 5,600, which is much more intelligible. But some other passages scarcely seem capable of this interpretation, so it must be admitted that the number forms a difficulty, whatever view we adopt.

There is only one other important argument against the truthfulness of the narrative, which is the entire absence of any *confirming* evidence from other sources. Of course, in regard to the Exodus itself, if the events were such as are recorded in the Pentateuch, the Egyptians must have been very much ashamed of themselves, and would be the last persons to refer to them. But still, considering the number of the

Israelites, and the centuries they stayed in Egypt, we might expect to find some allusions to them on Egyptian monuments. And perhaps we shall some day, though up to the present none have been discovered that are at all conclusive.

The excavations, however, that were made at Tel-el-Muskhuta in 1883 strikingly confirm a portion of the narrative.¹ For this turns out to be Pithom, one of the store cities said to have been built by the Israelites ; and we now learn not only that there was such a place, and that it was a store city, evidently intended for military supplies, being near the frontier, but that it was probably founded by Rameses II., who has long been thought to be the Pharaoh who so oppressed the Israelites.² And nearly its whole extent is occupied by the treasure chambers, which are divided by strong brick walls ; some of the bricks being made with straw, some with fragments of reed or stubble used instead, and some without any straw at all. And, unlike the usual Egyptian custom, the walls are built with mortar, which is expressly mentioned in the Bible.³

It must also be remembered that the *subsequent history* of the Israelites undoubtedly helps to confirm the Exodus. For that event occupied a unique place in their feelings, writings, and religion. Their religion was indeed based on it, as it comes at the beginning of the Decalogue ; and their most characteristic institution, the Passover, was directly associated with it,

¹ Transactions of Victoria Institute, vol. xviii., p. 85.

² Many critics, however, now consider that this was Thothmes III., which suits the Biblical dates much better.

³ Exod. 1. 11, 14 ; 5. 12.

even in name, and it is hard to see how so striking a ceremony could have been founded on mere fiction. A document might be forged, but not a memorial ordinance like this. So that even had the Pentateuch never been written, the subsequent writings and religion of the Israelites would still have formed a strong, though indirect, argument in favour of some miraculous deliverance from Egypt.

And this is further confirmed by the fact that scarcely anyone doubts that the Israelites were in bondage there at some time, and did somehow or other get away, and such a deliverance is not likely to have been forgotten ; and yet if it did not occur in the way recorded in Exodus, there is not the slightest trace or tradition of it anywhere.

These objections, then, are quite insufficient to invalidate the strong evidence of the Pentateuch ; and we therefore conclude in this chapter that it seems probable that the *origin* of the Jewish religion *was attested by miracles*.

CHAPTER X.

THAT ITS HISTORY WAS ATTESTED BY MIRACLES.

(I.) THE LATER OLD TESTAMENT BOOKS.

Arguments for and against their genuineness.

- (1.) Undesigned coincidences ; an example as to the rebellion of Korah.
- (2.) Their alleged mistakes ; unimportant.
- (3.) The effect of modern discoveries ; these have on the whole confirmed their accuracy.

(B.) THE OLD TESTAMENT MIRACLES.

- (1.) Their credibility ; this can scarcely be disputed, if miracles at all are credible ; some difficulties, the silence of the sun and moon ; trivial and diabolical miracles.
- (2.) Their truthfulness ; list of eight public miracles, two examples, Elijah's sacrifice on Mount Carmel, and the destruction of the Assyrian army, considered in detail ; conclusion.

HAVING now examined the origin of the Jewish Religion, we have next to consider its *history* ; which also claims to have been attested by miracles. So we will first offer a few remarks as to the *genuineness* of the Old Testament Books, from Joshua onwards ; and then consider some of the miracles which they record.

(A.) THE LATER OLD TESTAMENT BOOKS.

Now, the arguments as to the genuineness of these Books need not be discussed at length, since we have

already decided in favour of that of the Pentateuch, and nearly all critics who admit the one, admit the other. Suffice it, then, to say that we have in their favour first of all the universal tradition of the Jews, who, being the writers and custodians of these books, had the best possible means of knowing, and who revered them to such an extent that they could have had no doubt whatever as to their authenticity.

Secondly, there are a variety of internal marks of genuineness, such as undesigned coincidences, and the minute and graphic manner in which several of the events (including some of the miracles) are described ; and which seems quite beyond the power of invention in those early days. While lastly, there is the moral argument : many of the books, especially the Prophets, are not anonymous, but claim to have been written by certain men and at certain times. And therefore, unless genuine, they must be deliberate frauds ; executed, moreover, by men whose one object seems to have been to inculcate moral virtues, such as truthfulness.

On the other hand, the arguments against their genuineness are the *a priori* one, that they record miraculous events, which is supported by the historical one, that they contain various slight inaccuracies, as well as differences in style and language. And here, as in so many other cases, the former seems to be the *reason* for discrediting the books, the latter merely the *excuse*. We do not propose to examine these arguments in detail, but a few words may be said on three subjects, that of *undesigned coincidences*, the

importance of which is not obvious at first sight ; the alleged *mistakes* in the Old Testament ; and the effect of *modern discoveries*.

(1.) *Undesigned coincidences.*

Now, if we find two statements regarding an event, or series of events, which, though not identical, are yet perfectly consistent, this agreement must be either *accidental* or *not accidental*. An agreement which is too minute in detail to be accidental we will call a *coincidence*, and this of necessity implies that the statements are somehow connected together. If the alleged events are true, this connection may lie between *the facts themselves*, each writer having independent knowledge of these ; and hence their statements being in perfect though unintentional agreement. But if the alleged events are not true, then this connection must lie between *the writers*, either one of them making his account agree with the other, or else both deriving their information from a common source. In the former case, there would be intentional agreement between the writers ; in the latter, between the various parts of the original account. In any case, there would be designed agreement somewhere ; for, to put it shortly, the events, being imaginary, would not fit together of necessity, nor by accident, which is excluded, and hence must do so by design.

This has been otherwise expressed by saying that truth is necessarily consistent, but falsehood is not so ; and therefore, while consistency in truth may be undesigned, consistency in falsehood can only result from design. And from this it follows that an *undesigned*

coincidence between two statements — provided of course we are fully convinced that it is a coincidence, and that it is undesigned—is a sure sign of truthfulness. It shows, moreover, that both writers possessed independent knowledge of the event, and were both telling the truth. And of course the same argument applies if the two statements are made by the same writer, though in this case there is a greater presumption that the agreement is not undesigned. And it should be noticed that the more indirect and unobtrusive is the agreement so much the stronger is the argument, while the more obvious the agreement the weaker the argument.

Having now explained the great value of undesigned coincidences, we will consider a single example in detail, and select that referring to the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, as this is connected with an important miracle ; though it followed so soon after the Exodus, that it might have been considered in the last chapter. Now Korah, we are told,¹ was a Levite of the family of Kohath, and the other two were Reubenites ; and from incidental notices *in another part of the book*, we learn the position of the *tents* of these men. The Kohathites were to the south of the central Tabernacle, or Tent of Meeting, on an inner line of tents, while the Reubenites were also to the south, though on an outer line of tents.

This explains how easy it was for the leaders to form a secret conspiracy against Moses, as they could consult together without passing through any other tribe. It

¹ Num. 16. ; 2. 10, 17 ; 3. 29.

explains how, when Moses was talking to Korah (v. 8), he had to *send for* Dathan and Abiram (v. 12), who refused to come ; and how next morning (v. 16) Moses left the central Tabernacle (or Tent of Meeting) where the men had assembled to offer incense, and *went unto* Dathan and Abiram (v. 25). It explains how, later on, the *tents* of Dathan and Abiram are twice mentioned, while that of the leading conspirator, Korah, is strangely omitted (v. 26, 27). It explains how the *families* of these two were destroyed, though no mention is made of that of Korah, since the destruction was probably limited to the tents of Dathan and Abiram, who were brothers, and the schismatical tabernacle which had been erected alongside, and from which alone the rest of the people were told to *depart* (v. 26). (This must not be confused with the central Tabernacle where the men who offered incense were afterwards destroyed, probably by lightning.) We may therefore conclude that Korah's *family* was not destroyed, since their tent, being on the inner line, was at some distance. And this accounts for the mention of Dathan and Abiram alone in Deut. 11. 6, as well as for what some have thought to be a discrepancy in Num. 26. 11, where we read that the *children* of Korah did not die. In fact, the position of these tents is the key to the narrative throughout, though we are left to discover it for ourselves.

Now if the account is true and written by a contemporary, all is plain ; for truth, as said before, is necessarily consistent. But if the whole story is a late fiction, all this agreement in various places is, to say the

least, very remarkable. Can we imagine a writer of fiction *accidentally* arranging these details in different parts of his book, which fit together so perfectly ? Or can we imagine his doing so *intentionally*, and yet never hinting at the agreement himself, but leaving it so unobtrusive that not one reader in a thousand ever discovers it ? This single instance may be taken as a sample of numerous others which have been noticed all through the Bible ; and they certainly tend to show its accuracy.

(2.) *Their alleged mistakes.*

We pass on now to the alleged mistakes in the Old Testament, and considering the long period covered, and the variety of subjects dealt with, and often the same subject by various writers, the number of even apparent discrepancies is not very great ; and it is beyond dispute that many of these can be explained satisfactorily, and doubtless many others could be so were our knowledge more complete. Moreover, they are, as a rule, quite obvious, and have not been brought to light by recent discoveries. And the fact that the scribes, who, from time to time, copied the documents, allowed these discrepancies to remain, just as they were, without attempting to reconcile them, shows with what reverence they regarded the books. It has no doubt left some blemishes in the Bible, which less scrupulous copyists might have removed ; but it has added to our confidence that we have the original writings and not an ' improved ' edition of them.

It is also beyond dispute that many, perhaps most, of the mistakes are *numerical* ones, such as the chron-

ology in Kings and Chronicles, and the incredibly large numbers in some places.¹ But these may be due to some copyist expressing the numbers in figures, instead of, as usual, in words; and the Hebrew figures, *i.e.*, the letters used as such, are very confusing. For instance, *beth* and *caph* mean 2 and 20, while *daleth* and *resh* mean 4 and 200 respectively; and yet they are very much alike even in print, as the English reader can see in the headings of Ps. 119, Rev. Vers. Of course, when used as letters the rest of the word shows which is intended, but when used as numbers there is no check. Moreover, a letter expressing a small number, such as 3, is converted into 3,000 by merely adding two dots. Any other mistakes there may be are only such as any good historian might make, and are quite insufficient to raise any general distrust of the books.

(3.) *The effect of modern discoveries.*

Lastly, as to the effect of modern discoveries in Palestine, Egypt, Assyria, and elsewhere on the accuracy of the Old Testament. In the case of the Penta-teuch, as we have seen, there is very little direct evidence either way; but it is otherwise with regard to some of the later books.

In the first place, and this is very important, modern discoveries have completely changed what was formerly the chief argument on the subject. It used to be thought that the Jews were a kind of half-savage nation, living at a time when civilization was almost unknown, and when literary records could scarcely be expected.

¹ *E.g.*, 1 Sam. 6. 19; 1 Kings 20. 30; 2 Chron. 14. 8. 9.

But we now know that it was precisely the opposite. The period of Jewish history from the time of Moses onwards was distinctly a literary age. In Egypt, Babylonia, Syria, and elsewhere it was the custom, and had been for centuries, to chronicle all important events, at least all those that were creditable to the persons concerned; so that it is almost certain that the Jews, like the surrounding nations, had their historians. In every age conquerors have loved to record their conquests, and why should the Jews alone have been an exception?

And yet the historical books of the Old Testament have no competitors. If, then, we deny that these are in the main a contemporary record, we must either assume that the Jews, unlike the surrounding nations, had no contemporary historians, which is most unlikely; or else that their works were superseded in later days by other and less reliable accounts, which were universally mistaken for the originals, and this seems equally improbable.

Passing on now to the evidence in detail, it may be divided into two classes, geographical and historical. In the first place the *geography* of Palestine has been shown to be minutely accurate. But this of itself does not prove the Old Testament Books to be authentic, but merely that they were written by Jews who knew the country intimately. It does, however, raise a presumption in their favour, for late forgeries are very liable to mistakes of all kinds, while accuracy in small and unimportant details inspires confidence in a book. And much the same may be said of the *historical*

notices. The monumental records of the Kings of Judah and Israel have not at present been discovered, but we can often check the history by the records of other countries ; and these are as a rule in perfect agreement, not only as to the actual facts, but as to the society, customs, state of civilisation, etc., of the period. But this again does not prove the authenticity of the Books, though it also raises a presumption in their favour.

In some cases, however, the evidence is stronger than this, one of the best known instances being Daniel's mention of *Belshazzar*. He states that the last king of Babylon was Nebuchadnezzar's son, called Belshazzar, who was slain at night when the city was captured (about B.C. 538). But according to Berosus, who, though he only wrote about the third century B.C., was till recently our chief authority, all this appears to be wrong. The last king of Babylon was a usurper called Nabonidus, and any such person as Belshazzar is quite unknown. And so matters remained till some cuneiform inscriptions were discovered in 1854.

¶ From these it appears that Belshazzar was the eldest son of Nabonidus, and was apparently associated with him in the government ; though there is no proof that he ever had the title of *King*, unless he is the same as one *Mardukshazzar*, about this time (not otherwise identified), which is not unlikely, as we know Marduk was sometimes called *Bel*—i.e., Baal, or Lord. And another inscription, somewhat mutilated, seems to show that he was slain at Babylon in a night assault

upon the city, as described by Daniel, some months after Nabonidus had been taken prisoner.¹

As to his relationship with Nebuchadnezzar we learn that the mother of Nabonidus was an important person, so she was very likely the daughter of that monarch ; or possibly the usurper may have strengthened his claim by the common expedient of marrying a royal princess ; and there certainly seems to have been some connection between the families, as we know from the inscriptions that Nabonidus had a younger son called Nebuchadnezzar. In either case, Belshazzar would be a descendant of the former Nebuchadnezzar ; and as the same word is used in Aramaic for father and grandfather (see margin of Authorised Version), all the apparent mistakes would vanish.

And, of course, if Daniel himself wrote the book, he would have known all about Belshazzar, however soon afterwards it was forgotten. But, if the book was a forgery, written by a Jew in Palestine about B.C. 160, which is the rationalistic theory, as the wars between Egypt and Syria up to that date are clearly foretold, how was it that he knew the name of Belshazzar at all, or anything about him, when such a person was unknown to previous historians ? Plainly, then, this is a distinct argument in favour of the contemporary date of the book.

And much the same may be said of Isaiah's mention of Sargon of Assyria, who is stated to have taken Ash-

¹ Transactions of Victoria Institute, vol. xxxviii., 1906, p. 28 ; Pinches' Old Testament in Light of Historical Records, 1902, p. 415, 54.

dod. And yet the very existence of such a king was unknown to secular history, till the last century ; when his palace was discovered at Khorsabad, with inscriptions relating, among other things, his capture of Ashdod.¹

We have now briefly indicated the reasons for thinking that the books of the Old Testament are on the whole authentic and contemporary records. What, then, is the value of the evidence they afford as to the history of the Jewish Religion having been attested by miracles ?

(B.) THE OLD TESTAMENT MIRACLES.

We will include under this term both superhuman coincidences and evidential miracles in the strict sense ; and they occur all through the historical books of the Old Testament. But as these cover nearly a thousand years, and presumably all important miracles are recorded, they were not of very frequent occurrence. A few of them have been already noticed in the last chapter, but we must now discuss them more fully, first considering whether they are credible, and then whether they are true.

(I.) *Their credibility.*

Now this can scarcely be disputed, *provided miracles at all are credible*, which we have already admitted, since scientific difficulties affect all miracles equally ; and of course the Superhuman Coincidences present no difficulties of this kind whatever. Among these may be mentioned the destruction of Korah, the falling of the walls of Jericho, probably due to an

¹ Isa. 20, 1. Orr's Problem of Old Test., 1906, p. 399.

earthquake ; the lightning which struck Elijah's sacrifice ; several cases of recovery from sickness ; and many others, including some which appear at first sight to be strictly miraculous.

One of these we will consider in detail, because it is usually misunderstood, and is in consequence declared by some critics to be so hopelessly incredible, as to seriously compromise the whole Religion. This is the '*silence*' (or *standing still*) of the sun and moon,¹ which is often thought to involve an entire dislocation of the solar system, due to the earth's rotation being stopped, thus causing the sun and moon to apparently stand still. And it is justly urged that a miracle on so vast a scale, even if possible, is quite out of proportion to the end in view, which was merely the slaughter of a few Canaanites. But there is another, and far more probable explanation of the miracle.

It is that instead of being one of prolonged light, the sun remaining visible after it should have set, it was really one of prolonged darkness ; the sun, which had been hidden by thick clouds, being just about to shine forth, when Joshua prayed to the Lord that it might be *silent*, *i.e.*, remain obscured behind the clouds, which it did during the rest of the day. The Hebrew appears to be capable of either meaning. For the crucial word translated *stand still* is literally *be silent* (see margin), both in verses 12 and 13 ; and while this is very applicable to the sun's remaining obscured by clouds during the day, it could scarcely be used of its continuing to shine at night.

¹ Josh. 10. 12-14.

On the other hand, the rest of the passage seems to favour the ordinary view. But as it is a quotation from the poetical book of Jashar (now lost), a certain amount of figurative language must be allowed for. And anyhow, if we admit that this is what Joshua *prayed for*, that the sun and moon should remain *silent* or *obscured*, the rest of the passage can only mean that this is what took place. And it may be mentioned that, as early as the fourteenth century, the Jewish commentator Rabbi Levi ben Gershon maintained that the words did not mean that the sun and moon literally *stood still*, or in any way altered their motion, though it is only fair to add that this was not the general view.¹

Moreover, even if the word did mean *stand still*, Joshua would only be likely to have asked for the sun and moon to stand still, if they were apparently *moving*; and they only move fast enough to be apparent when they are just coming out from behind a dense bank of clouds, due, of course, to the clouds really moving. And to *stand still* in such a case, would mean to stay behind the clouds, and remain *obscured*, the same sense as before. And the words could then have had an *immediate* effect; visible at once to all the people, which certainly seems implied in the narrative, and which would not have been the case on the ordinary view.

Assuming, then, that either meaning is possible, a prolonged darkness is much the more probable for three

¹ Numerous quotations are given in 'A Misunderstood Miracle,' by Rev. A. S. Palmer, 1887, pp. 103-107.

reasons. To begin with, the miracle must have occurred in the early *morning* (Gibeon, where the sun was, being to the S.E. of the battlefield, and Ajalon, where the moon was, to the S.W.) ; and it is scarcely conceivable that Joshua, with the enemy already defeated, and nearly all the day before him, should have wished to have it prolonged. Secondly, just before the miracle there had been a very heavy thunderstorm, involving (as here required) thick clouds and a dark sky ; and this is stated to have been the chief cause of the enemy's defeat. And therefore Joshua is more likely to have asked for a continuance of this storm, *i.e.*, for prolonged darkness, than for light. Thirdly, the moon is mentioned as well as the sun, and, if Joshua wanted darkness, both would have to be *silent* ; but if he wanted light, the mention of the moon as well as the sun was quite unnecessary.

On the whole, then, the miracle seems to have been a superhuman coincidence between a prayer of Joshua and an extraordinary and unique thunderstorm, which caused the sun to remain *silent* or invisible all day ; a coincidence, however, so remarkable, that, if true, it would have considerable value. And if the Canaanites were sun-worshippers (as many think probable), there was a peculiar fitness in the sun being obscured the whole day, and it would naturally lead to their utter confusion.

Before we pass on we may notice two more general objections that are sometimes made to the Jewish miracles. The first is that some of them were of a very *trivial* character, such as Elisha's healing the waters of

Jericho, increasing the widow's oil, and making the iron axe-head to float ;¹ and hence it is urged they are most improbable. And no doubt they would be so, if we regard them as mere acts of kindness to individual persons ; but if we regard them as so many signs to the Israelites (and through them to the rest of the world), that Elisha was God's prophet, and that God was not a far-off God, but One who knew about and cared about the every-day troubles of his people, they are certainly not inappropriate. Indeed, if this was the end in view, they were precisely the kind of miracles most suited to attain this end. And if some years later it was necessary to remind the people that though Elisha was dead, yet Elisha's God was still living, and still took an interest in their welfare, then the miracle connected with the prophet's bones also loses a good deal of its improbability.²

The second and more important objection strikes at the evidential value of all the miracles. They could not, it is urged, have really attested any revelation from God, since the writers who describe them also describe other miracles, which, they say, were worked in opposition to God's agents. I have not met with a satisfactory explanation of these *diabolical miracles*, as they are called ; and if such events were of frequent occurrence in the Bible, they would form a great difficulty. But this is not the case. For if we exclude some doubtful instances, such as the raising of Samuel by the witch of Endor, and some general statements as to the powers of evil being able to perform marvels, there

¹ 2 Kings 2. 22 ; 4. 6 ; 6. 6.

² 2 Kings 13. 21.

remains only one instance in which we have any detailed facts to judge by.

This is the case of the magicians of Egypt, who imitated some of the earlier miracles of Moses and Aaron. And even here the inference is doubtful, for we are expressly told that this was due to their *enchantments*, a term which might very possibly cover some feat of jugglery, as they knew beforehand what was wanted, and had time to prepare. While the fact that they tried and failed to imitate the next plague, which was done suddenly, and without previous notice ; and which they frankly confessed was a Divine miracle, makes this a very probable solution.¹ Anyhow, it is little more than a *one-text* difficulty, and does not affect the Religion as a whole. We decide, then, that none of the Jewish miracles can be pronounced *incredible* ; though some of them no doubt seem very improbable.

(2.) *Their truthfulness.*

Now, of course, the miracles vary greatly in evidential value, the following being eight of the most important :

The destruction of Korah, Num. 16.

The passage of the Jordan, Josh. 3. 14-17.

The capture of Jericho, Josh. 6. 6-20.

Elijah's sacrifice on Mount Carmel, 1 Kings 18. 17-40.

The cure of Naaman's leprosy, 2 Kings 5. 10-27.

The destruction of the Assyrian army, 2 Kings 19. 35.

The shadow on the dial, 2 Kings 20. 8-11.

The three men in the furnace, Dan. 3. 20-27.

We will examine a couple of instances in detail and

¹ Exod. 7. 11, 17 ; 8. 2, 7, 18, 19.

select first *Elijah's sacrifice on Mount Carmel*. This event is said to have occurred on the most public occasion possible, before the King of Israel and thousands of spectators. And as a miracle, or rather *super-human coincidence*, it presents no difficulty whatever. The lightning which struck the sacrifice was doubtless due to natural causes; and yet, as before explained (Chapter VII.), this would not interfere with its evidential value.

Moreover, it was avowedly a test case to definitely settle whether Jehovah was the true God or not. The nation, we learn, had long been in an undecided state. Some were worshippers of Jehovah, others of Baal; and these rival sacrifices were suggested for the express purpose of settling the point. And therefore, if miracles at all are credible, there could not have been a more appropriate occasion for one; while it was, for the time at least, thoroughly successful. All present were convinced that Jehovah was the true God, and, in accordance with the national law, the false prophets of Baal were immediately put to death.¹

Now could any writer have described all this, even a century afterwards, if nothing of the kind had occurred? The event, if true, must have been notorious and well known for several generations; and if untrue, no one living near the time and place would have ventured to fabricate it. And (what renders the argument still stronger) all this is stated to have occurred, not among savages, but among a fairly civilised nation and in a literary age.

¹ Deut. 13.

Next as to *the destruction of the Assyrian army*. Here it will be remembered that when Sennacherib came to attack Jerusalem, he publicly, and in the most insulting manner, defied the God of Israel to deliver the city out of his hand (probably about B.C. 701).¹ We then read how Isaiah declared that God accepted the challenge, and would defend Jerusalem, and would not allow it to be destroyed. And the sacredness of the city is very strongly insisted on. For instance, 'The virgin daughter of Zion hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn, the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee,' and a great deal more to the same effect, ending with the emphatic assertion by Jehovah, '*I will defend this city to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.*'

Now it is inconceivable that such a passage could have been written after Jerusalem had been totally destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar (about B.C. 586) or even after it had been captured by him (B.C. 598).² There is of course no real inconsistency in God's preserving the city in the one case, and not in the other; for Nebuchadnezzar is always represented as being, though unconsciously, God's servant in punishing the Jews; while Sennacherib openly defied Jehovah.

After this comes the sudden destruction of the Assyrian army (probably by pestilence); and the extreme fitness of such a miracle, or *superhuman coincidence*, after Sennacherib's challenge must be obvious to everyone. Moreover, such a public and notorious event, if untrue, could not have been invented till long after-

¹ 2 Kings 18. 17; 19. 34.

² 2 Kings 24. 13; 25. 9.

wards ; and yet, as we have just shown, the narrative could not have been written long afterwards. Senacherib does not of course allude to it himself in his inscriptions, for kings never like to record their own defeats ; but this is no reason for doubting that it occurred, more especially as it is confirmed by the Babylonian historian Berosus.¹

We need not examine the other miracles in detail, since the argument is much the same in every case. They are all said to have occurred on important and critical occasions when, if we admit miracles at all, they would be most suitable. They are all said to have been *public* miracles, either actually worked before crowds of persons, or else so affecting public men that their truth or otherwise must have been notorious at the time. And they were all of such a kind that any mistake or fraud as to their occurrence was out of the question. It is, then, on the face of it, most unlikely that miracles, *such as these*, should have been described unless they were true. Indeed, if the Old Testament books were written by contemporaries, or even within a century of the events they relate, it is very difficult to deny their occurrence. We decide, therefore, that it seems probable that the history of the Jewish Religion was *attested by miracles*.

¹ Quoted by Josephus, Antiq. x. 1.

CHAPTER XI.

THAT ITS HISTORY WAS ALSO ATTESTED BY PROPHECIES.

(A.) GENERAL PROPHECIES.

Three examples considered .

(1.) The desolation of Assyria and Babylonia.

(2.) The degradation of Egypt.

(3.) The dispersion of the Jews, including the Roman siege.

(B.) SPECIAL PROPHECIES.

List of eight important ones : a single example, the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians considered in detail ; and some general remarks.

(C.) CONCLUSION.

The cumulative nature of the evidence.

WE pass on now to the Jewish Prophecies. And it should be explained at starting that the word *prophecy* is used in this Essay in the sense of *prediction* ; and not as it often is, in the Bible, to include exhortation and teaching. And the prophecies may be divided into two classes, general and special.¹

(A.) GENERAL PROPHECIES.

We will consider the General Prophecies first, excluding at present those referring to the Messiah (Chapter

¹ The former were called prophecies, and the latter predictions in the earlier editions of this book. .

XIX.) ; and, as we shall see, their agreement with history seems far too exact to be accidental, while in this case it is impossible to get over the difficulty by the favourite expedient of saying that they were written *after the event*. We will select for examination those concerning the Jews themselves, and their great neighbours Assyria and Babylonia, on the one hand, and Egypt on the other. All these nations had existed for centuries, and there seems no reason why the Jewish prophets should have pronounced any permanent doom on them at all, still less on their own people. But they did so, and with remarkable discrimination.

(1.) *The desolation of Assyria and Babylonia.*

And first as to Assyria and Babylonia. The future of these countries was to be utter *desolation*. The kingdoms were to be destroyed, the land was to become a wilderness, and the cities to be entirely forsaken. We read repeatedly that they were to be desolate *for ever* ; and though this cannot be pressed as meaning literally for all eternity, it certainly implies a long duration.¹ A single passage referring to each may be quoted at length.

Thus Zephaniah says of Assyria, ‘ And he will stretch out his hand against the north, and destroy Assyria ; and will make Nineveh a desolation, and dry like the wilderness. And herds shall lie down in the midst of her, all the beasts of the nations ; both the pelican and the porcupine shall lodge in the chapiters thereof [the

¹ Isa. 13. 19-22 ; 14. 22, 23 ; Jer. 50. 13, 39, 40 ; 51. 26, 37, 43 ; Nahum 3. 7 ; Zeph. 2. 13-15.

capitals of the fallen columns] : their voice shall sing in the windows ; desolation shall be in the thresholds : for he hath laid bare the cedar work. This is the joyous city that dwelt carelessly, that said in her heart, I am, and there is none else beside me : how is she become a desolation, a place for beasts to lie down in !

And Isaiah says of Babylon, ‘ And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldean’s pride, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation : neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there ; neither shall shepherds make their flocks to lie down there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there ; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures ; and ostriches shall dwell there, and satyrs [or goats] shall dance there. And wolves shall cry in their castles, and jackals in the pleasant palaces : and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged.’

It seems needless to comment on prophecies so plain and straightforward. Nor need we insist at any length on their exact fulfilment ; it is obvious to everyone. For two thousand years history has verified them. The utter desolation of these countries is without a parallel : the empires have vanished, the once populous land is deserted, and the cities are heaps of ruins, often the dens of wild beasts ; lions, hyænas, and jackals having all been seen among the ruins of Babylon. In short, the prophecies have been fulfilled in a manner which is, to say the least, very remarkable.

(2.) *The degradation of Egypt.*

And next as to Egypt. The future foretold of this country is not desolation but *degradation*. Ezekiel tells us it is to become a *base kingdom*, and he adds, 'It shall be the basest of the kingdoms ; neither shall it any more lift itself up above the nations : and I will diminish them, that they shall no more rule over the nations.'¹ And here also prophecy has been turned into history. The permanent degradation of Egypt is a striking fact which cannot be disputed. When the prophets wrote, Egypt had on the whole been a powerful and independent kingdom for some thousands of years : but it has never been so since. Persians, Greeks, Romans, Byzantine Greeks, Saracens, Memlooks, Turks, and we may now add British, have in turn been its masters ; but it has been the master of no one. It has never more *ruled over the nations* as it used to do for so many centuries. Its history in this respect has been unique—an unparalleled period of prosperity followed by an unparalleled period of degradation.

With such an obvious fulfilment of the main prophecy, it seems needless to insist on any of its details, though some of these are sufficiently striking. Thus Ezekiel's description of Egypt as the *basest* of kingdoms seems peculiarly appropriate to that country, which was once ruled by a dynasty of slaves (the Memlooks). Again, we read in the next chapter, *Her cities shall be in the midst of the cities that are wasted* ;² and though it is doubtful to what period this refers, yet no more

¹ Ezek. 29. 15.

² Ezek. 30. 7.

accurate description can be given of the present cities of Egypt, such as Cairo, than that they are in the midst of the cities that are wasted, such as Memphis, Bubastis, and Tanis.

And a few verses farther on is foretold the fate of the two ancient capitals, Thebes (called in the Bible *No* or *No-Amon*) and Memphis (called *Noph*). Both were to be destroyed, but of Memphis alone the significant detail is added, *Thus saith the Lord God, I will destroy the idols, and I will cause the images to cease from Noph*.¹ And what do we find? Both cities have been destroyed for centuries; but while the temples and statues of Thebes still remain, the admiration of all travellers, those of Memphis (though of great magnificence in the time of Herodotus) have now entirely perished, except such fragments as are buried underground. Only persons who have visited the two sites can fully realise the difference between them.

And again in this same verse we read, *There shall be no more a prince out of the land of Egypt*; and yet, when this passage was written, there had been independent Egyptian sovereigns from the very dawn of history; but there have been none since. Stress, however, is not laid on details like these, some of which are admittedly obscure, such as the forty years' desolation of the land with the scattering of its inhabitants,² but rather on the broad fact that Egypt was not to be destroyed like Assyria and Babylonia, but to be *degraded*, and that this has actually been its history.

¹ Ezek. 30. 13-16; Jer. 46. 19.

² Ezek. 29. 11-13; 30. 23, 26.

(3.) *The dispersion of the Jews.*

Lastly, as to the Jews. Their future was to be neither destruction nor degradation, but *dispersion*. This is asserted over and over again. They were to be scattered among the nations, and dispersed through the countries; to be wanderers among the nations; sifted among all nations; tossed to and fro among all the kingdoms of the earth; and scattered among all peoples from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth.¹ Moreover, in their dispersion they were to be subjected to continual *suffering* and *persecution*. They were to become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword among all people. Their curses were to be upon them, for a sign and for a wonder, and upon their seed for ever. They were to have a yoke of iron upon their necks; and to have the sword drawn out after them in all lands, etc. And yet, in spite of all this, they were not to be merged into other nations, but to remain *distinct*. They and their seed *for ever* were to be a separate people, a sign and a wonder at all times.²

And here again history has exactly coincided with prophecy. The fate of the Jews, since the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, has actually been *dispersion*, and this to an extent which is quite unique. It has been combined, moreover, with incessant suffering and persecution, and yet they have always remained a separate people. The Jews are still everywhere, though the Jewish nation is nowhere. They are

¹ Ezek. 22. 15; Hos. 9. 17; Amos 9. 9; Deut. 28. 25, 64; see also Lev. 26. 33; Deut. 4. 27; Neh. 1. 8; Jer. 9. 16.

² Deut. 28. 37, 46, 48; Lev. 26. 33; Jer. 24. 9; 29. 18.

present in all countries, but with a home in none, having been literally *scattered among the nations*.

We will now examine a single passage in detail, and select the latter part of Deut. 28. The whole chapter is indeed full of prophecies as to the future condition of the Jews, some of which seem to point to the Babylonian captivity, (*e.g.*, v. 36) ; but after this we come to another and final catastrophe in v. 49. This evidently begins a fresh subject, which is continued without a break till the end of the chapter, and it is specially interesting because, not only is the world-wide dispersion of the Jews clearly foretold, but also the *previous war* which led up to it. And though much of the language used would of course suit any ancient war, it seems to be particularly applicable to that in A.D. 70. We have, as is well known, a full account of this in the history of Josephus, and as he never alludes to the prophecy himself (except in the most general terms),¹ his evidence is beyond suspicion.

Ver. 49. First of all the conquerors themselves are described as a nation *from far, from the end of the earth, as the eagle flieth, a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand*, etc., which is very appropriate to the Romans, whose general Vespasian had come from Britain,² and their troops from various countries, who had the eagle as their standard, and whose language, Latin, was unknown to most of the Jews.

50. And the merciless way in which these fierce warriors were to spare neither old nor young was painfully true in their treatment of the Jews.

51. And they also of course destroyed or confiscated their property.

52. Then the war itself is foretold—in fact, emphasised—as

¹ Wars, iv. 6.

² Wars, iii. 1.

one of sieges, *throughout all the land*, rather than of open battles ; and this was actually the case in this war (though it had not been so in some other wars, such as those of the Maccabees), Jotapata, Japha, Tarichea, Gamala, Girschala, Macherus, and Masada, as well as Jerusalem itself, all suffering terrible sieges. And these were to be continued *till the high walls came down*, which is very suggestive of the Roman battering rams, that were actually used at several of these places.¹

- 53-55. Then we have the dreadful famine, due to the *straitness* of the siege (evidently the great siege, that of Jerusalem), which is strongly insisted on. And it was to lead to the fiercest strife, even members of the same family fighting for morsels of food ; and finally to drive the wretched inhabitants to cannibalism of the most revolting kind.
- 56-57. And this was to be the fate not only of the poor, but of the wealthy also ; even ladies of high position who would not put their feet on the ground, but were accustomed to be carried about in chairs (and therefore rich enough to buy anything that could be bought), secretly eating their own children. And all this, as we learn from Josephus, actually occurred during the Roman siege.² He describes how parents would fight with their children for fragments of food, and mentions one instance that was discovered, in which a lady *eminent for her family and wealth* (Mary, the daughter of Eleazar) had secretly eaten half her own child.
58. And these miseries were to come upon the Jews for their disobedience of God's laws ; and though, unfortunately, this was not confined to any one period, yet Josephus bears witness to their exceptional wickedness at this time ; which he says was so great that if the Romans had not destroyed their city, he thinks it would have been swallowed up by the earth, or destroyed like Sodom.³ In fact, towards the close of the war, their crimes seem to have been as unparalleled as their sufferings.
59. And it was to be no ordinary tale of suffering ; but the plagues of themselves, and of their seed, were to be

¹ Wars, iii. 7, 10 ; iv. 1, 2 ; vii. 6, 8.

² Wars, v. 10 ; vi. 3.

³ Wars, v. 13.

wonderful, even great plagues, and of long continuance, and sore sicknesses and of long continuance. And no one who has read the account of the siege, and the subsequent treatment of the Jews, will think the description at all exaggerated.

60. And the people are specially threatened with *the diseases of Egypt, which thou wast afraid of*, and this, as said in Chapter IX., implies that the passage was written soon after the people left Egypt, and therefore centuries before any siege or dispersion.
61. And all these woes, and many others, were to end, as they actually did end, in the destruction of the nation, *until thou be destroyed*.
62. And the Jews that survived were to be left comparatively *few in number*; and this was certainly the case, even allowing that the statement of Josephus that over 600,000 perished in the siege may be an exaggeration.¹
63. And these were to be forcibly expelled from the land of Canaan, which they were just about to conquer—*plucked from off the land* is the striking expression used; and they actually were so expelled by the Romans, partly after this war, and still more so after their rebellion in A.D. 134, when for many centuries scarcely any Jews were allowed to live in their own country, an event probably unique in history.
64. But instead of being taken away to a single nation, as at the Babylonian captivity, they were now to be scattered over the whole world, *among all peoples, from one end of the earth, even unto the other end of the earth*. And how marvellously this has been fulfilled is obvious to everyone. No mention is made of a *king* here, as in ver. 36; so while that suits the Babylonian captivity, this suits the later dispersion, though in each case there is a reference to serving other gods which cannot be satisfactorily explained.
- 65-67. And then we have the terrible *sufferings* that the Jews were to undergo in their dispersion. Among these nations they were to find no ease, nor rest for the sole of their foot, but were to have *a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and pining of soul*, and their life was

¹ Wars, v. 13.

to hang in doubt night and day. And here, again, the event is as strange as the prophecy. Nowhere else shall we find a parallel to it. For centuries the Jews have been subject to continual suffering and persecution, and are so still in some countries, such as Russia. They have found no rest anywhere, but have been driven from city to city, and from kingdom to kingdom, and have lived in daily fear of their lives.

68. Lastly, we read, that some of the Jews, instead of being dispersed, were to be *brought to Egypt again with ships*, and to be in bondage there. *And there ye shall sell yourselves* (or be sold) *unto your enemies for bondmen, and for bondwomen, and no man shall buy you.* This latter clause cannot, of course, be taken literally, for unless they were bought, they could not be sold; it can only mean that there were not enough buyers. And this also came true, after the Roman siege (though not, as far as we know, after any other siege), when the number of Jews sold for slaves was so great that there was a difficulty in finding purchasers, and many of them were sent to the mines in Egypt, probably in slave ships.¹

Everyone must admit that the agreement all through is very remarkable; in fact, the prophecies about the dispersion of the Jews—and we have only examined a single instance in detail—are even more striking than those about the desolation of Assyria and Babylonia, or the degradation of Egypt. And to fully realise their combined importance, let us suppose that anyone *now* were to foretell the future of three great nations, saying that one was to be utterly destroyed, and the land desolated; another to sink to be a base kingdom; and the third to be conquered and its inhabitants forcibly expelled, and scattered over the whole world. What chance would there be of any one of the pro-

¹ Wars, vi. 8, 9.

phesies (leave alone all three) coming true, and *remaining true for two thousand years*? And yet this would be but a parallel case.

What conclusion, then, must be drawn from all these prophecies, so clear in their general meaning, so distinctive in their character, so minute in many of their details, so unlikely at the time they were written, and yet one and all so exactly fulfilled? There seem to be only three alternatives to choose from. Either they must have been random *guesses*, which seems incredible; for such guesses do not, as a rule, come true. Or else they must have been due to deep *foresight* on the part of the writers, which seems equally incredible; for the writers had had no experience of the permanent desolation of great empires like Assyria and Babylonia, while as to the fate of Egypt and the Jews themselves history afforded no parallel. Or else, lastly, the writers must have had *revealed* to them what the future of these nations would be; in which case, and in which case alone, all is plain.

(B.) SPECIAL PROPHECIES.

We pass on now to the Special Prophecies. These are found all through the Old Testament, the following being eight of the most important.

The fact that David's throne should always be held by his descendants, *i.e.*, till the captivity, about 450 years;¹ and its fulfilment is specially remarkable when contrasted with the rival kingdom of Samaria, where the dynasty changed eight or nine times in 250 years.

The division of the kingdom into ten and two tribes,

¹ 2 Sam. 7. 12-17; 1 Kings 9. 4, 5.

evidently announced at the time, since Jeroboam had to flee in consequence, and apparently the reason why the rebels were not attacked.¹

The destruction, rebuilding, and final destruction of the Temple ; the first of these prophecies being made so publicly that it caused quite a commotion.²

The destruction of the altar at Bethel, which was set up as a rival to that at Jerusalem ; publicly announced some centuries before, including the name of the destroyer.³

The destruction of Israel by the Assyrians.⁴

The destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians.⁵

The captivity of the Jews, including its duration of seventy years, their most unlikely restoration, and the name of the restorer.⁶

The wars between Egypt and Syria.⁷

We will examine a single instance in detail, and select that referring to the *destruction of Jerusalem* by the Babylonians, as this is connected with one of the miracles mentioned in the last chapter, *the shadow on the dial*, which we will glance at in passing. Now, it will be remembered that, on one occasion, the Jewish King Hezekiah was seriously ill, and on being told by Isaiah of his unexpected recovery, he naturally asked for a *sign* ; and then in accordance with his demand the shadow on the dial went back ten *steps*.⁸ The *dial*

¹ 1 Kings 11. 30, 40 ; 12. 24.

² Jer. 26. 8-16 ; Isa. 44. 28 ; Dan. 9. 26.

³ 1 Kings 13. 2 ; 2 Kings 23. 15, 16 ; Josephus, Antiq., viii. 9.

⁴ 1 Kings 14. 15 ; Isa. 7. 8, 9 ; 8. 4.

⁵ 2 Kings 20. 17.

⁶ Jer. 29. 10 ; Isa. 44. 28.

⁷ Dan. 11.

⁸ 2 Kings 20. 8-11 ; 2 Chron. 32. 24, 31

was evidently a flight of steps (for the Hebrew word means steps),¹ with some object on the top which threw a shadow on a gradually decreasing number of these as the sun rose, and a sudden subsidence of the ground at one end, due perhaps to an earthquake, would quite account for the shadow going back and again covering some steps it had left. The event seems to have attracted considerable attention, since messengers came from Babylon to inquire about it (so it evidently was not noticed there, and must have been due to some local cause) and to congratulate the king on his recovery. And we may ask, how could any writer have asserted all this, even a century afterwards, if no such sign had occurred ?

We are then told that Hezekiah showed these messengers all his treasures, which leads up to the *prophecy* that the treasures should be carried away and Jerusalem destroyed by these very Babylonians. This is introduced in the most natural way possible as a rebuke to the king for his ostentatious display ; and it is difficult to consider it a later insertion. And yet the event could not have been humanly foreseen. For Babylon was then but a small and friendly nation, shortly to be absorbed into Assyria, and only when it reasserted its independence a century later did it become powerful enough to have caused any fear to the Jews.

It will not be necessary to discuss the other prophecies at length, since that they all refer to the events in question is generally admitted. Indeed, in some

¹ 2 Kings 20. 11 (margin, R.V.).

cases, owing to the mention of names and details, it cannot possibly be denied. And therefore, of course, those who disbelieve in prophecy have no alternative but to say that they were all written *after* the event.

At this lapse of time it is difficult to prove or disprove such a statement. But it must be remembered that to say that any apparent prophecies were written after the event is not merely to destroy their superhuman character, and bring them down to the level of ordinary writings, but far below it. For ordinary writings do not contain wilful misstatements, and yet every pretended prophecy written after the event cannot possibly be regarded in any other light. The choice then lies between *real prophecies* and *wilful forgeries*. There is no other alternative. And bearing this in mind, we must ask, is it likely that men of such high moral character as the Hebrew prophets,—men who declared that they spoke in the name of God,—should have been guilty of such gross imposture? Is it likely that, if guilty of it, they should have been able to palm it off successfully on the whole Jewish nation? And is it likely that they should have had any sufficient motive to induce them to make the attempt?

Moreover, many of these prophecies are stated to have been made *in public*, and to have been notorious and well known long before their fulfilment. And it is hard to see how this could have been asserted unless it was the case, or how it could have been the case unless they were superhuman.

It should also be noticed that in Deuteronomy the occurrence of some definite and specified event is given

as the *test* of a prophet, and the later prophets appeal to this very test. Thus Isaiah challenges the false prophets to foretell future events, and repeatedly asserts that this was the mark of a true prophet.¹ And it seems inconceivable that men should thus court defeat by themselves proposing a test which would have shown that they were nothing more than impostors. And yet this would have been the case if all their so-called prophecies had been uttered after the events.

Lastly, it is important to notice what we may call the *moral* aspect of these prophecies. Their object was not to satisfy mere curiosity as to the future ; they had a very different purpose. The prophet and the teacher were then combined, and the prophecies were, as a rule, only a means of enforcing the teaching, more especially God's overruling providence in the affairs of men. And therefore in almost every case the *reason* why the event was to come was foretold as plainly as the event itself. And prophecy thus became the interpreter of history, showing the Jews what were the objects God had in view in the various events which befell them.

And it has this moral use still. For though it is a truth of Natural Theology that God governs the world, and carries out His purposes in the history of men just as much as in the course of nature, yet it is a truth likely to be forgotten. And the history of the Jews enforces it on us in an instructive manner. We here see what we may call a small *sample* of the world's history,

¹ Deut. 18. 22 ; Isa. 41. 22 ; 44. 8 ; 48. 3-5 ; see also Deut. 13. 1-3.

annotated by God Himself, with His object in bringing about every important event announced beforehand ; this prior announcement being, of course, necessary to show that they were really God's purposes, and not the subsequent guesses of men.

(C.) CONCLUSION.

In concluding this chapter, we must notice the *cumulative nature* of the evidence. The instances we have enumerated of prophecies, and the same applies to the miracles mentioned in the last chapter, are but specimens, a few out of many which might be given. This is very important, and its bearing on our present argument is naturally twofold.

In the first place, it does not at all increase, and in some respects rather decreases, the difficulty of believing them to be genuine, for thirty miracles or prophecies, provided they occur on suitable occasions, are scarcely more difficult to believe than three. And the number recorded in the Old Testament shows that, instead of being mere isolated marvels, they form a complete series. Their object was the gradual instruction of the Jews, and through them of the rest of the world, in the great truths of Natural Theology, such as the existence of One Supreme God, who was shown to be *All-Powerful* by the miracles, *All-Wise* by the prophecies, and *All-Good* by His rewarding and punishing men and nations alike for their deeds. And it may be added many who now believe Natural Theology alone, and reject all revelation, would probably never have believed even this but for the Bible.

On the other hand, the number and variety of these

alleged events increase the difficulty of any *other* explanation to an enormous extent, for thirty miracles or prophecies are far more difficult to *disbelieve* than three. A successful fraud might take place once, but not often. An imitation miracle might be practised once, but not often. Spurious prophecies might be mistaken for genuine once, but not often. And yet, if none of these events are true, such frauds and such deceptions must have been practised, and practised successfully, over and over again. In short, the Old Testament must be a collection of the most dishonest books ever written, for it is full of miracles and prophecies from beginning to end ; and it is hard to exaggerate the immense *moral* difficulty of accepting such a view. Many of the Jewish prophets, as before said, inculcate the highest moral virtues ; and the Jewish religion, especially in its later days, is admittedly of high moral character. It seems, then, to be almost incredible that its sacred writings should be merely a collection of spurious prophecies uttered after the event and false miracles which never occurred. We therefore decide in this chapter that it seems probable that the *history* of the Jewish religion *was attested by prophecies*.

CHAPTER XII.

THAT THEREFORE THE JEWISH RELIGION IS PROBABLY TRUE.

Only one subject remains to be discussed, the Character ascribed to God in the Old Testament.

(A.) ITS PARTIALITY.

But any revelation must be more or less partial.

(B.) ITS DIFFICULTIES.

- (1.) Mental difficulties, or anthropomorphism ; but we must use *representative terms* when speaking of the Deity, and the writers quite understood the terms to be such.
- (2.) Moral difficulties ; since God is shown as approving of wicked men, ordering wicked deeds, and sanctioning wicked customs ; but these objections are not so great as they seem.

(C.) ITS GENERAL EXCELLENCE.

The Jews firmly believed in Monotheism, and had the highest mental and moral conception of the Deity ; so that their religion was Natural Theology, only with certain additions.

(D.) CONCLUSION.

The Jewish Religion is probably true.

WE have been considering in the previous chapters several strong arguments in favour of the Jewish Religion ; and before concluding we must of course notice any *adverse* arguments which we have not

already examined. The only one of any importance refers to the Character ascribed to God in the Old Testament, and we will consider this under the three heads of its *partiality*, its *difficulties*, and its *general excellence*, and will then conclude with some general remarks.

(A.) ITS PARTIALITY.

And first as to the alleged *partiality* in God's Character. The objection here is that God is the just God of all mankind, and it is therefore incredible that He should have selected a single nation to be His special favourites, more particularly as His alleged attempt to make them a holy people proved such a hopeless failure. While it is further urged that the very fact of the Jews believing Jehovah to be their special God shows that they regarded Him as a mere national God, bearing the same relation to themselves as the gods of other nations did to them.

But, as said in Chapter VI., any Revelation implies a certain *partiality* to the men or nation to whom it is given ; but it is not therefore incredible. And there is certainly no reason why the Jews should not have been the nation chosen, and some slight reason why they should ; for their ancestor Abraham was not selected without a cause. He did, partly at least, deserve it, since, judging by the only accounts we have, he showed the most unbounded confidence in God in leaving his home in Haran, and the most implicit obedience to God in his willingness to offer up Isaac ; and such confidence and obedience may well have deserved a blessing. It must also be remembered that God's so-called partiality to the Jews did not

imply any indulgence to them in the sense of overlooking their faults. On the contrary, He is represented all along as blaming and punishing them, just as much as other nations, for their iniquities.

Next, as to God's purpose in regard to Israel having been a *failure*. This is only partly true. No doubt the Israelites were, with many bright exceptions, a sinful nation ; but they were not worse than, or even so bad as, the nations around them ; it was only the fact of their being the chosen race that made their sins so heinous. They had free will, just as men have now ; and if they chose to misuse their freedom and act wrong, that was not God's fault. Moreover, Israel was not selected merely for its own sake, but for the sake of all mankind. This is expressly stated at the very commencement, '*In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.*'¹ And this strange promise has certainly been fulfilled ; for however sinful the nation may have been, they preserved and handed on God's revelation, and the Old Testament remains, and will always remain, as a permanent and priceless treasure of religion.

The last part of the objection, that God's alleged selection of the Israelites shows that they believed their Jehovah to be only a national God, may be dismissed at once, as it proves precisely the opposite. For if Jehovah *selected* Israel to be His people, He must have had a power of choice, and might, if He pleased, have selected some other nation, and therefore He could not have been a mere national God, but the God of all nations, with power to select among

¹ Gen. 12. 3.

them. And this is distinctly asserted by many of the writers.¹

We conclude, then, that God's partiality to the Jews does not, when carefully considered, form a great difficulty. To put it shortly, if a revelation is given at all, some individuals must be selected to receive it ; if it is given gradually (and God's methods in nature are always those of gradual development) these men must in all probability belong to a single nation ; and if one nation has to be selected, there is no reason why the Jews should not have been the one chosen ; while, if they were selected for the purpose of handing on God's revelation to the world at large, the purpose has been completely successful.

(B.) ITS DIFFICULTIES.

Passing on now to the *difficulties* in God's Character, these may be conveniently classed under the two heads of mental and moral.

(I.) *Mental difficulties.*

The objection here is that the Jewish idea of God is very *anthropomorphic*, the Deity being represented as a great Man, with human form, feelings, attributes, and imperfections. Thus He has hands and arms, eyes and ears ; He is at times glad or sorry, angry or jealous ; He moves about from place to place ; and sometimes repents of what He has done, thus showing, it is urged, a want of foresight on His part. And all this is plainly inconsistent with the character of the immaterial, omnipresent, omniscient God of nature. The answer to this objection is twofold.

¹ E.g., Deut. 32. 8 ; 2 Chron. 20. 6 ; Isa. 37. 16 ; Amos. 9. 7.

In the first place, it is almost impossible for the human mind to form any conception of the Deity which is not to some extent anthropomorphic, which merely means human. For a moment's reflection will show that we are bound to use what are called *representative terms* (Chapter VIII.) when speaking of the Deity. And if such terms are used at all, those drawn from human analogies are not only the easiest to understand, but are also the least inappropriate, since, as we have shown, man resembles God in that he is a personal and moral being ; and therefore likening God to man is not so degrading as likening Him to natural forces. Such expressions, then, must always be considered as descriptions drawn from human analogies which cannot be pressed literally.

While, secondly, it is plain that the Jewish writers themselves so understood them, for they elsewhere describe the Deity in the most exalted language, as will be shown later on. And this is strongly confirmed by the remarkable fact that the Jews, unlike other ancient nations, had no material idol or representation of their Deity. Inside both the tabernacle and the temple there was the holy of holies with the mercy-seat, but no one sat on it. An empty throne was all that the shrine contained. Their Jehovah was essentially an invisible God, who could not be represented by any human or other form ; and this alone seems a sufficient answer to the present objection.

(2.) *Moral difficulties.*

Next as to the *moral* difficulties. Many of these depend on single texts, or doubtful passages, and so

need scarcely be examined ; but there are at least three of a more general character. These are that God is frequently represented as approving of wicked men, as ordering wicked deeds, and even in His own laws as sanctioning wicked customs. We will consider these points in turn.

And first as to God's *approving of wicked men* ; that is, of men who committed the greatest crimes, such as Jacob and David. This is easily answered, since approving of a man does not mean approving of *everything* he does. The case of David affords a convincing example of this ; for though he is represented as a man after God's own heart, yet we are told that God was so extremely displeased with one of his acts that He punished him for it severely in causing his child to die. In the same way no one supposes that God approved of Jacob because of his treachery, but in spite of it. Moreover, in estimating a man's character, his education and surroundings have always to be taken into account. And therefore, if the conduct of one man living in an immoral age is far better than that of his contemporaries, he may be worthy of praise, though similar conduct at the present day might not deserve it.

And if it be asked what there was in the character of these men, and many others, to counterbalance their obvious crimes, the answer is plain : it was their intense and unfaltering belief in the spiritual world. The existence of One Supreme God, and their personal responsibility to Him, were realities to them all through life ; and therefore, in spite of many

faults, they were, on the whole, worthy of commendation.

Next as to God's *ordering wicked deeds*. In all cases of this kind it is important to distinguish between a man's personal acts and his official ones. At the present day the judge who condemns a criminal and the executioner who hangs him are not looked upon as murderers. And the same principle applies among uncivilised nations. If the ruler of the country decides that a man is worthy of death, and thereupon sends someone to kill him, his doing so is not a murder in the ordinary sense. It is merely carrying out the command of the sovereign, which may or may not be justified.

Now in the Old Testament the Israelites are represented as living under the immediate rule of God. He was their true Sovereign, and therefore when a man, or body of men, had to be punished for their crimes, He commanded some prophet or king, or perhaps the whole people, to carry out the sentence. And of course, if they failed to do so, even from kindness of heart, they were blamed, just as we should blame a hangman at the present day who failed to do his duty.

Thus, in the case of *destroying the Canaanites*, which is the instance most often objected to, the Israelites were told, in the plainest terms, that they were only acting as God's ministers, and that if they behaved as badly as the Canaanites, God would have them exterminated too.¹ This was not the usual way in which they were to carry on wars, but the Canaanites, for their special and exceptional wickedness, had to be

¹ E.g., Lev. 18. 28 ; Deut. 9. 5.

specially punished. They were in fact a horribly polluted race,¹ and it was quite in accord with God's methods in nature (where the *unfit* are always destroyed) to have them exterminated. And viewed in this light, the difficulties under this head are very greatly reduced, even if they do not disappear altogether.

A more serious objection is that God is occasionally represented as if He Himself *caused* men to do wrong, such as His *hardening Pharaoh's heart*.² But this may be only another instance in which the Bible omits all secondary causes, and refers everything direct to the First Cause (see Chapter VII.). And as the writer asserts more than once that Pharaoh hardened his own heart,³ there can be little doubt that he meant the two expressions to be synonymous.

Lastly, as to God's *sanctioning wicked customs*. The most important is that of *human sacrifice*; but it is extremely doubtful whether the passages relied on do sanction this custom;⁴ since it is clearly laid down elsewhere that the firstborn of *men* are never to be sacrificed, but are always to be redeemed. While human sacrifices among other nations are strongly condemned, in one passage Jehovah expressly saying that they were not to be offered to Him.⁵ It is, however, further urged that we have two actual instances of such sacrifices in the case of Isaac and Jephthah.⁶

But with regard to *Jephthah*, he evidently had no

¹ Lev. 18. 20-25.

² E.g., Exod. 14. 4.

³ Exod. 8. 15, 32; 9. 34; 10. 3.

⁴ Exod. 22. 29, 30; Lev. 27. 28, 29.

⁵ Exod. 13. 13; 34. 20; Num. 18. 15; Deut. 12. 31.

⁶ Gen. 22; Judg. 11. 39.

idea when he made his vow that it would involve the sacrifice of his daughter. Having made it, however, he determined to keep it; and during the two months which intervened no one seems to have tried to dissuade him from it. This certainly shows that human sacrifices were not regarded with the same abhorrence then as they are now; but it does not show that they were ever ordered by God, or in any way acceptable to Him.

In the case of *Isaac* we have the one instance in which God did order a human sacrifice; but this is worthless as an argument, since He specially intervened to prevent the order from being carried out. And the whole affair, the command and the counter-command, must of course be taken together. It was required to test Abraham's faith to the utmost, and therefore as he most valued his son he was ordered to offer him. And since children were then universally regarded as property, and at the absolute disposal of their parents, human sacrifices being by no means uncommon, the command, however distressing to his heart, would have formed no difficulty to his conscience. But when his faith was found equal to the trial, God interposed, as He had of course intended doing all along, to prevent Isaac from being actually slain. Thus we have not a single instance of a deliberate human sacrifice offered to Jehovah in the whole course of Jewish history before or after the Exodus, and this is an additional reason against interpreting these doubtful laws as if they ordered such sacrifices.

With regard to the other practices, such as *slavery*, *polygamy*, and *trial by ordeal*, it is undisputed that they were recognised by the Mosaic laws, and also that they are quite opposed to our modern ideas of right and wrong. But it must be remembered that none of these practices were instituted by the laws. The Pentateuch neither commands them nor commends them; it merely mentions them, and, as a rule, to guard against their abuse. Take, for instance, the case of slavery. The custom was, and had been for ages, universal. All the Mosaic laws did was to recognise its existence and to provide certain safeguards; making kidnapping, for instance, a capital offence, and ordering the periodic release of slaves.¹

On the other hand, many *worse customs* existed at the time which the Jewish laws did rigorously forbid,² so that the case stands thus: At the time of the Exodus society was in an extremely low moral state. Many of its worst customs were absolutely forbidden by the laws; others were sanctioned, though in a mitigated form. While at the same time a code of morals was introduced, summed up in the Decalogue, of such permanent value that it has been practically accepted by the civilised world.

(C.) ITS GENERAL EXCELLENCE.

Having now discussed the alleged mental and moral difficulties in God's character at some length, it is only fair to see what can be said on the other side. And much indeed may be said; for the Jewish conception of the Deity, when considered as a whole, and apart

¹ Exod. 21. 2, 16; Lev. 25. 41.

² E.g., Lev. 18-20.

from these special difficulties, was one of the loftiest ever formed by man.

To begin with, the Jews firmly believed in *Monotheism*, or the existence of One Supreme God. This was the essence of their religion. It is stamped on the first page of Genesis ; it is implied in the Decalogue ; it occurs all through the historical books ; it is emphasised in the Psalms and Prophets. They were never without it, and it made them into a nation. And in this respect the Jews stood alone among the surrounding nations. Some others, it is true, believed in a God who was more or less Supreme ; but they always associated with him a variety of lesser deities, which really turned their religion into Polytheism. With the Jews it was not so. Their Jehovah had neither rivals nor assistants. He was the one and only God ; and as for the so-called gods of other nations, they looked upon them as either non-existent or utterly contemptible, and even ridiculed the idea of their having the slightest power.¹ And it may be added, this is a subject on which the Jews have become the teachers of the world, for both the great monotheistic Religions of the present day, Christianity and Mahometanism, have been derived from them.

Moreover, the great problem of the *Existence of Evil* never led the Jews, as it did some other nations, into Dualism, or the belief in an independent Evil Power. Difficult as the problem was, the Jews never faltered in their belief that there was but One Supreme God, and that therefore everything that existed, whether

¹ Deut. 4. 39 ; 1 Kings 18. 27 ; 2 Kings 19. 15-18 ; Ps. 115. 4-8.

good or evil, existed by His permission, and was in a certain sense His doing.¹ But this is not all, for the Jews ascribed to this Supreme God the very highest attributes. His name, Jehovah or *I Am*, implied the Self-Existent One, and they exhausted language to proclaim His excellence.

They described Him as *Omnipotent*; the Creator, Preserver, and Possessor of all things, the Cause of all nature, the Sustainer of all life, Almighty in power, and with whom nothing is too hard.²

They described Him as *Omniscient*; infinite in understanding, wonderful in counsel, perfect in knowledge, the Designer of all nature down to its smallest details, knowing and foreknowing even the thoughts of men.³

They described Him as *Omnipresent*; filling Heaven and earth, though contained by neither, existing everywhere, and from Whom escape is impossible.⁴

They described Him as *Eternal*; the Eternal God, the Everlasting God, God from everlasting to everlasting, Whose years are unsearchable, the First and the Last.⁵

They described Him as *Unchangeable*; the same at all times, ruling nature by fixed laws, and with Whom a change of purpose is impossible.⁶

¹ Isa. 45. 7; Prov. 16. 4; Job 2. 6; Exod. 3. 14.

² Gen. 1. 1; Neh. 9. 6; Gen. 14. 22; Amos 5. 8; Job 12. 10; 1 Chron. 29. 11; Jer. 32. 17.

³ Ps. 147. 5; Isa. 28. 29; Job 37. 16; Prov. 3. 19; Ps. 94. 9; Ezek. 11. 5; Ps. 139. 2.

⁴ Jer. 23. 24; 1 Kings 8. 27; Prov. 15. 3; Ps. 139. 7.

⁵ Deut. 33. 27; Gen. 21. 33; Ps. 90. 2; Job 36. 26; Isa. 48. 12.

⁶ Mal. 3. 6; Ps. 148. 6; Num. 23. 19.

And lastly, they described Him as in His true nature *Unknowable* ; far above human understanding, a hidden God, and showing but the outskirts of His ways.¹ This will be enough to show the lofty *mental* conception which the Jews formed of the Deity. And it may be added, after more than twenty centuries of progress, we cannot improve upon it at the present day.

But now for their *moral* conception. They believed their God to be not only infinite in power and wisdom, but also, what is more remarkable, they ascribed to Him the highest moral character. It is needless to quote texts here, as the fact is indisputable. He was not only a *beneficent* God, Whose blessings were unnumbered, but He was a *righteous* God also. His very Name was Holy, and His hatred of evil is emphasised all through to such an extent that at times it forms a difficulty, as in the extermination of the Canaanites. Thus the *goodness* they ascribed to God was a combination of beneficence and righteousness very similar to what we discussed in Chapter V.

Moreover, in this respect the God of the Jews was a striking contrast to the gods of the surrounding nations. We have only to compare Jehovah with Moloch and Baal, or with the Egyptian gods, Ptah and Ra, or with the classical gods, Jupiter and Saturn, and the superiority of the Jewish conception of the Deity is beyond dispute. In particular it may be noticed that other nations had the revolting habit of ascribing sexuality to their deities. Even the gods they worshipped as

¹ Job 11. 7 ; Isa. 40. 28 ; 45. 15 ; Job 26. 14.

more or less supreme always had their female companions. Thus we have Baal and Astaroth, Bel and Istar, Osiris and Isis, Zeus and Hera, Jupiter and Juno, and numbers of others. It is needless to point out how easily such an idea led to immorality being mixed up with religion, a vice from which the Jews were absolutely free. Indeed, few things are more remarkable, even with this remarkable people, than that the innermost shrine of their temple contained a code of *moral laws*, the *Ten Commandments*. This was the very centre of their religion, their most cherished possession; and they believed them to have been written by God Himself.

Nor can it be said that this high conception of the Deity was confined to the later period of Jewish history. For the above texts have been purposely selected from all through the Old Testament, and even Abraham, the remote ancestor of the Jews, seems to have looked upon it as self-evident that Jehovah, the *Judge of all the earth*, should *do right*.¹ No wonder, then, believing in such a perfect Being as this, the Jews, in contrast with most other nations, thought that their first and great commandment was to *love* God rather than to *fear* Him, that they were each individually responsible to Him for their conduct, and that every sin was a sin against God, Who was a searcher of hearts, and the impartial Judge of all men.² So much, then, for the Jewish conception of the Deity

¹ Gen. 18. 25.

² Deut. 6. 5; Eccles. 12. 14; Gen. 39. 9; 1 Chron. 28. 9; Job 34. 19.

when considered as a whole and apart from special difficulties.

Now what is all this but to say that the Jewish God, Jehovah, was the true God, the God of Natural Theology, the Being Who is All-Powerful, All-Wise, and All-Good, and Whose existence and attributes have been discussed in the earlier chapters of this *Essay*? In short, the Jewish Religion was Natural Theology, with some additional, though not inconsistent, rites; and this cannot be said of other ancient religions.

And it may be noticed in passing that Natural Theology also has its moral difficulties, since such events as earthquakes and plagues have often been urged against the goodness of God with much greater force than anything that occurs in the Bible. But in each case we infer God's character from the vast majority of facts, and then try and find some explanation for the small minority. And, as we have seen, such explanations are not, as a rule, hard to find in regard to the moral difficulties of the Old Testament. While few will deny that the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, with all its so-called moral defects, has done more to improve the lives of men than any other book that was ever written.

The idea, then, that the character ascribed to God in the Old Testament renders the Jewish religion incredible, or even improbable, is out of the question. Difficulties there may be here and there, but they sink into utter insignificance when contrasted with its general excellence. And yet strange to say the Jews

were not a more advanced nation than those around them. On the contrary, in the arts both of peace and war they were vastly inferior to the great nations of antiquity, but in their conception of the Deity they were vastly superior ; or, as it has been otherwise expressed, they were men in religion though children in everything else. And this appears to many to be a strong argument *in favour* of their religion. For unless it was revealed to them by God Himself, it is not likely that the Jews alone among ancient nations would have arrived at the true conception of the Deity. And unless they were in some peculiar sense God's people, it is not likely that they alone would have worshipped Him.

(D.) CONCLUSION.

Before concluding this chapter, we must notice three arguments of a more general character ; all of which are undisputed, and all of which are distinctly in favour of the Jewish religion. The first is that the Jews are anyhow *a unique nation*. For centuries, though scattered throughout the world, they have been held together by their religion. If this was, as far as it went, the true religion, the fact is to some extent explicable ; but if their religion was nothing better than other ancient and false religions, it is hopelessly inexplicable.

The second is that their early history, either real or supposed, has exerted a greater and more beneficial influence on the world for the last thousand years, than that of all the great nations of antiquity put together. Millions of men have been helped to resist sin by the Psalms of David, and the stories of Elijah, Daniel, etc.,

over whom the histories of Egypt and Assyria, Greece and Rome, have had no influence whatever. And the *effect* of the Religion being thus unique, raises a presumption that its *cause* may have been unique also ; in other words that it may have been divinely revealed.

The third is that the Jews themselves always prophesied that their God, Jehovah, would one day be universally acknowledged.¹ And (however strange we may think it) this has actually been the case, and the God of this small and insignificant tribe—the *God of Israel*—is now worshipped by millions and millions of men (Christians) of every race, language, and country, throughout the civilised world. These are facts that need explanation, and the Truth of the Jewish Religion seems alone able to explain them.

In conclusion it is scarcely necessary to give a summary of the arguments in this portion (Part II.) of the Essay. Suffice it to say that in the previous chapters we have shown that there are strong reasons for thinking that the account of the *Creation* was divinely revealed ; that the *origin* of the Jewish religion was attested by miracles ; and that its *history* was attested both by miracles and prophecies. And it should be noticed, each of these arguments is independent of the others. We have not, for instance, assumed the Divine origin of the religion, when arguing about its history, or either of these when discussing the first chapter of Genesis. Thus the evidence is all cumulative and far more than sufficient to outweigh the improbability of the religion, due to its apparent favouritism,

¹ E.g., Ps. 22. 27 ; 86. 9 ; Isa. 11. 9.

which is the most important argument on the opposite side ; as the other difficulties discussed in this chapter are comparatively trivial. Moreover, we know so little as to why man was created, or what future God intended for him, that it is not easy to say whether the religion is really so improbable after all. On the other hand, the evidence in its favour is plain, direct, and unmistakable. And we therefore decide that the *Jewish Religion is probably true.*

PART III.

THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

CHAP. XIII. THAT THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION IS CREDIBLE.

- „ XIV. THAT THE FOUR GOSPELS ARE AUTHENTIC FROM EXTERNAL TESTIMONY.
- „ XV. THAT THE GOSPELS ARE AUTHENTIC FROM INTERNAL EVIDENCE.
- „ XVI. THAT THE GOSPELS ARE AUTHENTIC FROM THE EVIDENCE OF THE ACTS.
- „ XVII. THAT THEREFORE THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST IS PROBABLY TRUE.
- „ XVIII. THAT THE OTHER NEW TESTAMENT MIRACLES ARE PROBABLY TRUE.
- „ XIX. THAT THE JEWISH PROPHECIES CONFIRM THE TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY.
- „ XX. THAT THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST CONFIRMS THE TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY.
- „ XXI. THAT THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY ALSO CONFIRMS ITS TRUTH.
- „ XXII. THAT ON THE WHOLE THE OTHER EVIDENCE SUPPORTS THIS CONCLUSION.
- „ XXIII. THAT THE THREE CREEDS ARE DEDUCIBLE FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT.
- „ XXIV. THAT THEREFORE THE TRUTH OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION IS EXTREMELY PROBABLE.

CHAPTER XIII.

THAT THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION IS CREDIBLE.

By the Christian Religion is meant the Three Creeds.

(A.) THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY.

- (1.) Its meaning ; Three Persons in One Nature.
- (2.) Its credibility.
- (3.) Its relation to Natural Theology, more probable than simple Theism.

(B.) THE DOCTRINE OF THE INCARNATION.

- (1.) Its difficulties ; not insuperable.
- (2.) Its motive ; God, it is said, loves man, and wishes man to love Him, and this is not improbable for several reasons.
- (3.) Its historical position.

(C.) THE DOCTRINE OF THE ATONEMENT.

The common objections do not apply because of the *willingness of the Victim.*

- (1.) As to the Victim ; this does away with the injustice.
- (2.) As to the Judge ; it appeals to His mercy not justice.
- (3.) As to the sinner ; it has no demoralising tendency.

(D.) THE DOCTRINE OF THE RESURRECTION.

- (1.) Christ's Resurrection ; not incredible, for we have no experience to judge by.
- (2.) Man's resurrection ; not incredible, for the same body need not involve the same molecules.

(E.) CONCLUSION.

Four important considerations which show that the Christian Religion, though improbable, is certainly not incredible.

We pass on now to the Christian Religion, by which we mean the facts and doctrines contained in the *Three*

Creeds, commonly, though perhaps incorrectly, called the Apostles', the Nicene, and the Athanasian. And, as these doctrines are of such vast importance, and of so wonderful a character, we must first consider whether they are credible. Is it conceivable that such doctrines should be true, no matter what evidence they may have in their favour? In this chapter, therefore, we shall deal chiefly with the difficulties of Christianity. Now its four great and characteristic doctrines are those of the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Atonement, and the Resurrection; and we will examine each in turn, and then conclude with a few general remarks.

(A.) THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY.

To begin with, the Christian religion differs from all others in its idea of the nature of God. According to Christianity, the Deity exists in some mysterious manner as a *Trinity of Persons* in a *Unity of Nature*; so we will first consider the meaning of this doctrine, then its credibility, and then its relation to Natural Theology. It is not, as some people suppose, a kind of intellectual puzzle, but a statement which, whether true or false, is fairly intelligible, provided, of course, due attention is given to the meaning of the words employed.

(I.) *Its meaning.*

In the first place, we must carefully distinguish between *Person* and *Substance*; this is the key to the whole question. The former has been already considered in Chapters III. and IV., though it must be remembered that this term, like all others, when applied to God, cannot mean exactly the same as it

does in regard to man. All we can say is that, on the whole, it seems the least inappropriate word. The latter is a difficult term to define, and is rather misleading, since it is not the modern English word, but a Latin translation of a Greek word, which would be better rendered by *nature* or *essence*.

But though difficult to define, its meaning is tolerably clear. Take, for instance, though the analogy must not be pressed too far, the case of three men ; each is a distinct human *person*, but they all have a common human *nature*. This human nature, which may also be called human substance (in its old sense), humanity, or manhood, has of course no existence apart from the men whose nature it is ; it is merely *that* which they each possess in common, and the possession of which constitutes each a man. And hence, any attribute belonging to human nature as such would belong to each of the three men, so that each would be mortal, each subject to growth, etc., each would in fact possess the complete human nature, and yet together there would not be three human natures, but only one.

Bearing this in mind, let us now turn to the doctrine of the Trinity. This is expressed in vv. 3-6 of the Athanasian Creed as follows :—

3. ' The Catholic Faith is this, that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity.

4. ' Neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Substance.

5. ' For (*i.e.*, because) there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost.

6. ' But (on the other hand) the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one, the Glory equal, the Majesty co-eternal.'

Here, it will be noticed, vv. 5 and 6 give the *reasons* for v. 4, so that the Godhead in v. 6 is, as we should have expected, equivalent to the Divine *Substance* or Nature in v. 4. Thus the meaning is as follows :—

We must worship one God (as to Nature) in Trinity (of Persons) and Trinity (of Persons) in Unity (of Nature) ; neither confusing the Persons, for each is distinct ; nor dividing the Nature, for it is all one.

Thus far there is no intellectual difficulty in the statements of the Creed. We do not mean that there is no difficulty in believing them to be true, or in accurately defining the terms used ; but that, as statements, their meaning is quite intelligible.

We now pass on to the following verses which are deductions from this, and show that as each of the three Persons possesses the Divine Nature, all attributes of the Deity (*i.e.*, of this one Divine Nature) are possessed by each of the three. Each is therefore *eternal*, and yet there is only *one* eternal nature. But this is expressed in a peculiarly short and abrupt manner. No one of course supposes that God is Three *in the same sense* in which He is One, but the Creed does not sufficiently guard against this, perhaps because it never occurred to its author that anyone would think it meant such an obvious absurdity. Moreover, even grammatically the verses are not very clear. For the various terms *uncreate*, *incomprehensible* (*i.e.*, boundless, or omnipresent), *eternal*, *Almighty*, *God*, and *Lord*

are used as if they were adjectives in the first part of each sentence, and nouns in the latter part.

But we must remember these verses do not stand alone. As just said, they are deductions from the previous statement of the doctrine of the Trinity ; and, therefore, they must in all fairness be interpreted to agree with that doctrine, and not to contradict it. And the previous verses (3-6) show clearly that where *three* are spoken of, it refers to persons ; and where *one* is spoken of, it refers to substance or nature. And of course the same applies to all the attributes, including *God* and *Lord*, though the statements here are often thought to be a contradiction in terms. But this is not the case. For the Creed nowhere asserts that there are three Gods and yet but one God, which would be a contradiction in terms. Nor does it say that the Father is *a* God, the Son *a* God, etc., which would imply that together there must be three Gods. What it does say is that there are Three Persons, each of whom is God, and yet but one God ; and though this statement, *if it stood alone*, might be thought unintelligible, yet considering the position it occupies in the Creed its meaning is quite clear. God is Three in regard to Personality, and One in regard to Nature.

While, however, admitting that this is the undoubted meaning of all these verses, it is important to add that the words seem to imply some closer union between the Divine Persons than that of merely possessing in common one Divine Nature. And, therefore, the human analogy before considered is misleading in some respects. Moreover, three men do

not make up the whole of humanity, but the three Divine Persons do make up the whole of the Godhead. In the same way the *names* given to these Divine Persons are not independent names like those of different men or of heathen gods, each of whom might exist separately ; but they are all *relative* names, each implying the others. Thus the Father implies the Son, for Fatherhood would be meaningless without Sonship ; and of course an Everlasting Father implies an Everlasting Son, so that any idea of priority in point of time, as in the case of a human father and son, is out of the question. Similarly the Son implies the Father, and the Spirit implies Him whose Spirit He is.

And though these names are no doubt very inadequate, for human language is but the record of human experience, and cannot therefore express that of which we have no experience whatever, such as the nature of God ; yet no better ones can be suggested, and they certainly convey the idea of the Divine Persons being of the *same* Nature or Substance, which is the all-important point. We conclude then that the Doctrine of the Trinity means the existence of three Divine Persons, each possessing in its entirety the one Divine Nature, and closely united together in an unknown, but not therefore incredible, manner.

Before passing on it may be mentioned that numerous analogies from nature have been suggested for the doctrine of the Trinity. None of them, as we should expect, are at all satisfactory, since the universe cannot afford an adequate analogy to its Maker, any more than the works of man can afford an adequate analogy to the

man himself, but still they are better than nothing. Perhaps one of the least inadequate is that of solar *light*, *colour*, and *heat*. Each is in a certain sense solar radiance, and each is distinct from the others ; and yet they are so closely united that together they form but one radiance. Each is also co-extensive with the others in time and space. There never was a time when there was sunlight without colour and heat ; and if one is eternal and omnipresent, so are the others. Each is also in its true nature unknowable, and each is, as a rule, invisible. But just as solar colour may be manifested to us as the rainbow at a particular time and place, and yet be omnipresent all the time, so Christians believe that God the Son was manifested to the world at a particular time and place, yet remaining omnipresent all the time. And just as heat, though invisible, pervades the whole universe, and is the source of all life, so Christians believe that the Holy Spirit, though invisible, is omnipresent, and, as the Creed says, the Giver of Life. And the analogy could be illustrated in many other details if necessary.

(2.) *Its credibility.*

Having now discussed the meaning of the Christian doctrine, we have next to consider whether it is credible. It must of course be admitted that the doctrine is very mysterious, and though fairly intelligible as a doctrine, is extremely hard to realise (and some might say inconceivable) when we try to picture to ourselves what the doctrine actually means. But we must remember that the nature of God is anyhow almost inconceivable, even as simple Theism. We cannot picture to ourselves a

Being Who is omnipresent,—in this room, for instance, as well as on distant stars. Nor can we imagine a Being Who is grieved every time we commit sin, for if so, considering there are over twelve hundred million persons in the world, He must be grieved many thousands of times *every second* ; as well as being glad whenever anyone resists sin, also, let us hope, several thousand times a second. All this may be true, just as the marvels of science—the luminiferous æther, for instance, with its millions of vibrations every second—may be true, but our minds are quite unable to realise any of them.

Thus, as said in Chapter III., though we have ample means of knowing what God is *in His relation to us* as our Creator and Judge, yet as to His real nature we know next to nothing. Nor is this surprising when we remember that the only being who in any way resembles God is man ; and that man's nature, notwithstanding all our opportunities of studying it, still remains a mystery.

Now Christianity does attempt (in its doctrine of the Trinity) to state what the Deity is *in Himself*, and apart from His relation to us, or His operations in nature ; and that this should be to a great extent inconceivable to our minds seems a necessity of the case. Indeed, any doctrine of the Deity which we could thoroughly understand would be self-condemned, for the nature of God must be to a great extent beyond human understanding, just as the nature of man is beyond the understanding of animals ; though they may realise what man is *to them*, in his power or his kindness. And for all we know plurality in unity, like

omnipresence, may be one of the unique attributes of the Deity, which cannot be understood (because it cannot be shared) by anyone else. The mysteriousness of the Christian doctrine is therefore, if we may use the expression, befitting the mysteriousness of its Subject ; and it is certainly not incredible on this account.

(3.) *Its relation to Natural Theology.*

Lastly we must ask, how does the Christian doctrine of God agree with that of Natural Theology ? There is of course no possible *contradiction* between the two, for the arguments of Natural Religion, though they show the *Unity* of God, go no further than a unity of *outward action* ; they do not and cannot tell us what this one God is *in Himself*, whether He exists as one or more Persons. In the same way (if we may without irreverence take a homely illustration) a dozen letters might be so extremely alike as to show that they were all written by one man, but this would not tell us what the man was *in himself*, whether, for instance, he had a body and mind alone, or whether he had also a spirit or free will, or how these were related to one another. And therefore Natural Religion in no way conflicts with Christianity.

But still it is often thought that the Trinitarian doctrine is much more difficult to believe than the Unitarian, and perhaps it seems so at first sight. But there are certainly some reasons for thinking the contrary, for Unitarianism has been well described as the easiest Religion to get, but the hardest to keep. On the other hand, the doctrine of the Trinity is addressed *to the reason* ; it requires thinking about

and studying, but when carefully considered, it seems to many to be less difficult to believe than simple Theism.

In the first place, the Christian doctrine meets to a great extent what is perhaps the chief difficulty of Theism, that of conceiving of an Infinite God who is yet *Personal*. For, as shown in Chapter III., personality seems to imply a limitation and separation of some kind; and therefore an eternal Person would require something else eternal, from which he is separated; and Natural Theology cannot of course supply this, though Christianity can, as it believes in more than one Divine Person. Thus on the Trinitarian theory God is complete in Himself, and contains in His own Being all that is needed for His own perfection; whereas, on the Unitarian theory we have either a solitary Being dwelling alone from all eternity, or else we must make the universe itself eternal to be His companion.

And both these theories have enormous difficulties. Take for instance the attributes of *Power* and *Wisdom*, both of which, as we have seen, are necessarily involved in the idea of a Personal Being, able to design. How could a solitary God dwelling alone before the Creation of the world have been able to exercise either His Power or His Wisdom? As far as we can judge there could have been no object for either. His Power could have produced nothing, His Wisdom could have thought of nothing. He would have been a *potential* God only, with all His capacities unrealised. And when carefully considered, such a view seems quite incredible.

And yet the only other alternative requires not only that the world itself should be eternal ; but makes it in reality as necessary to God, as God is to the world ; and this is hardly a satisfactory theory.

Nor is it in any way an adequate one. For though a material universe, existing eternally, might supply an object for God's Power and Wisdom, yet as we have seen God possesses *moral* attributes as well, such as Goodness. He is in fact a Moral, as well as a Personal Being. And all moral attributes—everything connected with right and wrong—can only be thought of as existing between two *persons*. We cannot be good to an atom of hydrogen, or unjust to a molecule of water. We can it is true be kind to *animals*, but this is simply because they resemble personal beings in having a capacity for pleasure and pain. But moral attributes in their highest perfection can only exist between two persons. And therefore as the eternal God possesses, and must always have possessed, such attributes, it seems to require some other eternal *Person*. And yet the idea of there being another God is scarcely conceivable ; so we can only conclude (however hard it may be to realise) that there must be more than one Person, and yet but one God.

The argument is no doubt a difficult one to follow, but a single example will help to explain it. Take for instance the attribute of *love*. This, unless it is mere self-love, requires at least two persons—one to love, the other to be loved. And therefore if love has always been an attribute of the Deity, it requires either some other Eternal (and therefore Divine) Person to be

loved ; or else that God should have been eternally *creating* persons, like men or angels, as objects of His love. And this latter seems not only improbable, but also inadequate, as love, in its perfection, can only exist between two beings *of the same nature*. And yet, when we think of the meaning of the term God, His omnipresence and omnipotence, it seems impossible that there can be more than one. We are then forced into this dilemma : we must believe in at least two Eternal Persons, and yet in but one God ; and the Christian doctrine of the Trinity in Unity seems the least difficult explanation.

But this is not all, for Natural Theology itself leads us to look upon the Deity in *three* distinct ways. We may think of Him as the Eternal, Self-Existent One, the Absolute and Unconditioned of modern philosophy. Or we may think of Him as the Creator and Evolver of the Universe, the Upholder of each planet, the Designer of each plant ; the Being by Whom the world was made, and Who perhaps will one day be its Judge. Or, again, we may think of Him in His relation to ourselves as a Divine Spirit, holding intercourse with our spirits, and speaking to us by our conscience. And yet our reason compels us to acknowledge that the Divine Persons we thus contemplate are but one God. And what is this but the Christian doctrine of the Trinity in Unity ?

Or, to otherwise express it, according to philosophy, the Deity is a *Transcendent* God, dwelling apart from Nature, above and beyond the world. According to science, He is an *Immanent* God, dwelling within

Nature, the Omnipresent but Unknown Power which is everywhere working. The former corresponds to the mechanical idea of the universe, regarding God as a Being who long ago made a perfect world, and has since left it to itself; the latter to the organic idea, regarding God as still acting throughout the universe. Both ideas may be illustrated, though of course imperfectly, by human analogy; for our spirit both transcends matter, being above and distinct from our bodies, and is also immanent in matter. The former view leads to what is called *Deism*, the latter to *Pantheism* in its higher forms. And considering how strong a hold both these doctrines have had on the human mind in all ages, there is doubtless some truth in each. Christianity alone unites the two doctrines, and declares that God is both Transcendent and Immanent, as well as bearing some close relationship to ourselves, being in fact immanent in *man* as well as in Nature, of which our conscience is a perpetual witness.

Or, to repeat it once more in a slightly different form: there are, as is well known, three main arguments in favour of the existence of God. The first, or that from *Causation*, is derived from the universe requiring an external Cause to account for it, and leads to the God of Philosophy. The second, or that from *Design*, leads to the ever-active God of Nature. While the third, or *Moral* argument, leads to the God of Conscience. Now each of these arguments has been already considered in Chapters I., II., and V., and each appears to be sound, and to require a distinct Divine Person; and yet it is obvious all the time that there

can be but one God. And what, again, is this but the Christian doctrine of the Trinity in Unity : the Father the Source of all, the Son by Whom all things were made, and the Spirit bearing witness with our spirits ; and yet not three Gods, but one God ? It is not, of course, meant that the God of Philosophy, of Nature, and of Conscience correspond accurately with the Three Persons of the Christian Trinity, still less that the Christian doctrine could have been derived from any such speculations ; but merely that when the two are compared there is seen to be a certain harmony between them.

On the whole, then, we decide that the Doctrine of the Trinity is certainly credible and perhaps slightly probable ; for to put it shortly, Nature forces us to believe in a personal God, and yet, when we reflect on the subject, the idea of a personal God, Who is only one Person, seems scarcely tenable.

(B.) THE DOCTRINE OF THE INCARNATION.

We next come to the doctrine of the Incarnation, which however is so clearly stated in the Athanasian Creed, that its meaning is quite plain. God the Son, we are told, the second Person of the Trinity, was pleased to become Man and to be born of the Virgin Mary, so that He is now both *God* and *Man*. He is God (from all eternity) of the Substance or Nature of His Divine Father, and Man (since the Incarnation) of the Substance or Nature of His human Mother ; complete God and complete Man ; equal to the Father as concerning His Godhead (for He is of the same Nature) and inferior to the Father as concerning His

Manhood (for human nature is necessarily inferior to the Divine). Moreover, though He possesses these two Natures, they are not changed one into the other, or confused together, but each remains distinct, though both are united in His One Person. This is in brief the doctrine of the Incarnation, and we will first consider its difficulties, then its motive, and then its historical position.

(I.) *Its difficulties.*

The first of these is that the Incarnation would be a *change* in the existence of God, Who is the changeless One. He, it is urged, is omnipresent and always the same, whereas an Incarnation would imply that at some particular time and place a momentous change occurred, and for ever afterwards God became different from what He had been for ever before.

This is no doubt a serious objection, but it must not be exaggerated. For an Incarnation would not strictly speaking involve any change in the Divine Nature itself. God the Son remained completely and entirely God all the time, He was not (as just said) in any way changed into a man, only He united to Himself a human nature as well. And then as to God's being brought into relation with time and place, the creation of the world did this long ago, for He created it, or began to create it, at a certain definite time, and in a certain definite place. And the same applies to the creation of man. And perhaps if we knew more of the Nature of God, and also of the nature of man, who we must remember was made to some extent in the image of God, and this possibly with a view to the Incarnation, we should see

that it was just as natural for God to become Man, as it was for God to create man. We have really nothing to argue from. An Incarnation seems improbable, and that is all we can say.

But if it took place at all, there is nothing surprising in this planet being the one chosen for it. Indeed, as far as we know, it is the only one that could be chosen, since it is the only one which contains personal and moral beings in whom God could become incarnate. Of course other planets *may* contain such beings ; but as said before (Chapter V.) this is only a conjecture, and in the light of recent investigations not a very probable one. While if they do contain such beings, these may not have sinned, in which case our little world, with its erring inhabitants, would be like the lost sheep in the parable, the only one which the Ruler of the Universe had to come and save.

The second difficulty is, that the Incarnation would lead to a *compound Being*, who is both Divine and human at the same time, and this is thought to be inconceivable. But here the answer is obvious, and is suggested by the Athanasian Creed. Man himself is a compound being ; he is the union of a material body and an immaterial spirit, in a single person. And the Incarnation in which Christians believe is the union of the Divine Nature and the human nature in a single Person. Both appear equally improbable, and equally inconceivable to our minds, if we try and think out all that they involve ; but as the one is actually true, the other is certainly not incredible.

The third and last of these difficulties refers to the

miraculous *Virgin-birth*. But if we admit the possibility of an Incarnation, no method of bringing it about can be pronounced incredible. The event, if true, is necessarily unique, and cannot be supposed to come under the ordinary laws of nature. Indeed, that a child born in the usual way should be the Eternal God, is just as miraculous as if He were born in any other way. While considering that one object of the alleged Incarnation was to promote moral virtues in man, such as purity, the virgin-birth was most suitable, and formed an appropriate beginning for a sinless life.

(2.) *Its motive.*

But we now come to a more important point, for the Incarnation, if true, must have been the most momentous event in the world's history ; and can we imagine a sufficient reason for it ? God we may be sure does not act without motives, and what adequate motive can be suggested for the Incarnation ? Now the alleged motive, indeed the fundamental axiom of Christianity, is that God *loves* man, and as a natural consequence wishes man to love Him. Is this then incredible, or even improbable ? Certainly not, for several reasons.

To begin with, as we have already shown, God is a Personal and Moral Being, Who cares for the welfare of His creatures, more especially for man. And this, allowing for the imperfection of human language, may be described as God's *loving* man, since disinterested love for another cannot be thought an unworthy attribute to ascribe to the Deity. On the other hand, man is also a personal and moral being, able to some extent

to return God's love. And to this must be added the fact that man, at least some men, do not seem altogether unworthy of God's love, while we certainly do not know of any other being who is more worthy of it.

Moreover, considering the admitted resemblance between God and man, the analogy of human parents loving their children is not inappropriate. Human parents often love their children intensely, and will sometimes even die for them ; while, as a rule, the better the parents are the more they love their children, and this in spite of the children having many faults. Is it, then, unlikely that the Creator may love His children also, and that human love may be but a reflection of this—a further application of the admitted law that man is made in the image of God ? The evidence we have may be slight, but it all points the same way.

Now, if it be granted that God loves man, we have plainly no means of estimating the *extent* of this love. But by comparing the other attributes of God, such as His wisdom and His power, with the similar attributes of man, we should expect God's love to be infinitely greater than any human love ; so great indeed that He would be willing to make any sacrifice in order to gain what is the object in all love, that it should be returned. Might not then God's love induce Him to become Man, that He might the better win man's love ?

And it must be remembered that man's love, like his will, is *free*. Compulsory love is in the nature of things impossible, and therefore God cannot force man to love Him, He can only induce Him ; and what inducement can be suggested more powerful than the Incarnation ?

For it shows, as nothing else can show, that God's love is a self-sacrificing love ; and this is the highest form of love. Indeed, if it were not so, in other words, if God's love cost Him nothing, it would be in this respect *inferior* to that of many men. But if, on the other hand, God's love involved self-sacrifice ;—if it led to Calvary—then it is the highest possible form of love. And then we see that God's attributes are all, so to speak, on the same scale ; and His Goodness is as far above any human goodness, as the Power which rules the universe is above any human power ; or the Wisdom which designed all nature is above any human wisdom. And thus, if the Incarnation still seems inconceivable, may it not be simply because the love of God, like His other attributes, is so inconceivably greater than anything we can imagine ?

Moreover a self-sacrificing love is the form which of all others is most likely to lead to its being returned. And experience proves that this has actually been the case. The condescending love of Christ in His life, and still more in His death, forms an overpowering motive which, when once realised, has always been irresistible.

But more than this. Not only does the Incarnation afford the strongest possible motive for man to love God, but it *enables* him to do so in a way which nothing else could. Man, it is true, often longs for some means of intercourse or communion with the Deity, but yet this seems impossible. The gulf which separates the Creator from the creature is infinite, and can never be bridged over by man, or even by an angel, or other

intermediate being. For a bridge must of necessity touch *both sides*; so if the gulf is to be bridged over at all, it can only be by One Who is at the same time both God and Man. Thus the Incarnation brings God, if we may use the expression, within measurable distance of man, so that the latter has no mere abstract and invisible Being to love, but a definite Person, Whose Character he can appreciate and Whose conduct he can to some extent follow. In short, the Incarnation presents man with a worthy Object for his love and devotion, and yet with an Object Whom he can partly at least understand and partly imitate. And he is thus able to become in a still truer sense a *child of God*, or, as it is commonly expressed, God became Man that man might become as far as possible like God.

And this leads us to another aspect of the Incarnation. Christ's life was meant to be an *example* to man, and it is clear that a *perfect* example could only be given by a Being Who is both God and Man. For God alone is above human imitation, and even the best of men have many faults; so that from the nature of the case, Christ, and Christ alone, can present us with a perfect example, for being Man He is capable of imitation, and being God He is worthy of it.

Now what follows from this? If Christ's life was meant to be an example to man, it was essential that it should be one of *suffering*, or the example would have lost more than half its value. Man does not want to be shown how to live in prosperity, but how to live in adversity, and how to suffer patiently. The desertion of friends, the malice of enemies, and a cruel death

are the occasional lot of all mankind. They are perhaps the hardest things a man has to bear in this world, and they have often had to be borne by the followers of Christ. Is it incredible, then, that He should have given them an example of the perfect way of doing so ; gently rebuking His friends, praying for His murderers, and acting throughout as only a perfect man could act ? Of course it may be said that such a life and death are degrading to the Deity ; and no doubt they seem so at first sight. But, strictly speaking, suffering, if borne voluntarily and for the benefit of others, is not degrading, especially if the benefit could not be obtained in any other way.

When we consider all this, it is plain that many reasons can be given for the Incarnation. Of course it may be replied that they are not adequate ; but we have no means of knowing whether God would consider them adequate or not. His ideas are not like ours ; for what adequate motive can we suggest for His creating man at all, let alone all the lower animals ? But yet He has done so. And having created man and given him free will, and man having misused his free will, all of which is admitted, that God should endeavour to restore man cannot be thought incredible. Indeed it seems almost due to Himself that He should try and prevent His noblest work from being a failure. And if in addition to this God loves man still, in spite of his sins, then some intervention on his behalf seems almost probable. And God may thus have designed the Incarnation, leading up to the Atonement, as a *remedy* for man's sin. And assuming man to

retain his free will, and not to be *obliged* to forsake sin, the remedy has doubtless been as successful as possible.

And thus the Incarnation removes any remaining difficulty that may be felt in regard to God's permitting evil to enter the world ; since He foresaw not only the disease but its remedy, and in due time brought it about. This is, of course, only one reason for the Incarnation, and had man never sinned it would probably have taken place. It was, as the Nicene Creed says, *for us men*, and not merely *for our salvation*, that Christ came down from heaven ; and it is unreasonable to think that the benefits of the Incarnation, such as uniting the human nature to the Divine, showing man what God is, and what he himself ought to be, are all the result of man's sin. But if an Incarnation for sinless men would be credible, still more is it so for sinners, who are in such need of help and guidance.

(3.) *Its historical position.*

It may still be objected that if the foregoing reasons are really sufficient to account for the Incarnation, it ought to have taken place near the commencement of man's history. And no doubt when we contemplate the great antiquity of man, stretching back into neolithic and palæolithic times, this often seems a great difficulty. But we have in reality very little to judge by, and that little does not support the objection. For in nature God seems always to work by the slow and tedious process of evolution, not attaining the results He wished for all at once, but by gradual development. And, therefore, it is only natural that if He revealed

Himself to man, it would be by the same method—at first indistinctly—*Natural Religion*, which in its elementary stage certainly dates back to neolithic times (perhaps earlier), as the burial customs show a belief in a future life; then more clearly—the *Jewish Religion*; and finally by becoming Man Himself—the *Christian Religion*.

According to Christianity, the whole previous history of the world was really a preparation for the Incarnation. But only when the preparation was complete, *when the fulness of the time came*, as St. Paul expresses it,¹ did it take place. And it has certainly proved, as we should have expected, an epoch-making event. In all probability the history of the world will always be considered relatively to it in years B.C. and A.D. And very possibly it has a significance far beyond man or even this planet. For we must remember man is not merely a link in a series of created beings indefinitely improving, in which case no doubt in future ages an Incarnation in man would appear as improbable as we should now think an Incarnation in one of the lower animals. But (as shown in Chapter V.) there are strong reasons for thinking that man is the *end* of the series, the last stage in creation, the highest organised being that will ever appear on this planet, or, as far as we know, on any planet.

And, therefore, man's rank in the universe cannot be determined by the size of this earth. Where else shall we find a personal and moral being with attributes superior to those of man? Where else indeed

¹ Gal. 4. 4.

shall we find a personal or moral being at all? The only answer science can give is *nowhere*. But if so, man's position in the universe is one of unique pre-eminence. And it is this inherent greatness of man, as it has been called, which justifies the Incarnation. *He is worthy that Thou should'st do this for him.*

Moreover when we consider God the Son as the Divine Person who is specially *immanent* in nature, and who has been evolving the universe through countless ages from its original matter into higher and higher forms of life, there seems a special fitness in its leading up to such a climax as the Incarnation; when by becoming Man He united Himself with matter in its highest and most perfect form. Thus the Incarnation, like the Copernican system of astronomy, or the theory of Evolution, if once accepted, throws a new light on the entire universe; and it has thus a grandeur and impressiveness about it, which to some minds is very attractive. On the whole, then, we decide that the doctrine is certainly not incredible, though it is no doubt improbable.

(C.) THE DOCTRINE OF THE ATONEMENT.

We pass on now to the doctrine of the Atonement, which is that Christ's death was in some sense a sacrifice for sin, and thus reconciled (or made 'at-one') God the Father and sinful man. And though not formally stated in the Creeds, it is implied in the words, *Was crucified also for us*, and *Who suffered for our salvation*.

The chief objections to the doctrine are of course on moral grounds. The idea of atonement, it is said, or

of one man being made to suffer as a substitute for another, and thus appeasing the Deity, was well-nigh universal in early times, and is so still among savage nations. Such a sacrifice, however, is a great injustice to the *victim*; it ascribes an unworthy character to God, as the *Judge*, Who it assumes can be satisfied with the punishment of an innocent man in place of the guilty one; and is demoralising to the *sinner*, on whose behalf the sacrifice is offered, allowing him to sin on with impunity, provided he can find another substitute when needed.

The answer to this objection is, that it takes no account of the most important part of the Christian doctrine, which is the *willingness* of the Victim. According to Christianity, Christ was a willing Sacrifice, Who freely laid down His life;¹ while the human sacrifices above alluded to were not willing sacrifices, since the victims had no option in the matter. And, as we shall see, this alters the case completely both in regard to the victim himself, the judge, and the sinner.

(1.) *As to the Victim.*

It is plain that his willingness does away with the injustice altogether. There is no injustice in accepting a volunteer for any painful office provided he thoroughly knows what he is doing, for he need not undertake it unless he likes.

(2.) *As to the Judge.*

Next it will be seen that the willingness of the victim changes the manner in which the sacrifice

¹ E.g., John 10. 18.

appeals to the judge. A mere *substitution* sacrifice appeals to his sense of *justice*, and endeavours to satisfy it by giving, as far as possible, a literal fulfilment of justice, modified only in the one respect of the punishment not being borne by the guilty person.

But a *willing* sacrifice appeals not to his justice, but to his *mercy*; it endeavours, so to say, to stimulate this element of mercy and to soften his heart. That it would have this effect in human cases is almost certain. If a judge had before him a criminal who well deserved punishment, but a good man, perhaps the judge's own son, came forward, and not only interceded for the prisoner, but was so devotedly attached to him as to offer to bear his punishment (pay his fine, for instance), this would certainly influence the judge in his favour. It would show that he was not so hopelessly bad after all, and the judge would feel more inclined to be merciful. Justice and mercy, then, though hard to reconcile, are both facts of human nature; and it is also a fact of human nature, that the voluntary suffering, or willingness to suffer, of a good man for a criminal whom he deeply loves, does incline man to mercy rather than justice.

Now, have we any reason for thinking that God also combines, in their highest forms, these seemingly inconsistent attributes of justice and mercy? Certainly we have; for, as shown in Chapter V., Natural Theology, not to mention the Jewish Religion, leads us to ascribe to God precisely such a combination. As there shown, the suffering in this world forces us to conclude that the *goodness* of God is not simple

beneficence, but this combined with some other attribute which we called *righteousness*. And these general terms, when applied to the special case of judging sinners, closely correspond to mercy and justice. God, as we have seen, combines both these attributes, and a combination of both is required by the Christian doctrine. Mercy alone would have forgiven men without any atonement; justice alone would not have forgiven them at all. But God is both merciful and just, and therefore the idea that voluntary atonement might incline Him to mercy rather than justice does not seem incredible.

And this is precisely the Christian doctrine. The mercy of God the Father is called out towards sinful man by Christ's generous sacrifice of Himself on man's behalf; so that, to put it shortly, *God forgives sins for Christ's sake*. And it should be noticed the idea of sins being *forgiven* which occurs all through the New Testament, and is alluded to in the Apostles' Creed, shows that Christ's Atonement was not that of a mere substitute, for then no forgiveness would have been necessary. If, for example, I owe a man a sum of money, and a friend pays it for me, I do not ask the man to forgive me the debt; I have no need of any forgiveness. But if, instead of paying it, he merely intercedes for me, then the man may forgive me the debt for my friend's sake. And this corresponds to this aspect of the Christian doctrine; for the Atonement, like the Incarnation, is a many-sided doctrine, which can be regarded from various points of view.

We must also remember that though for convenience we speak of *justice* and *mercy* as two separate attributes of the Deity, they are probably closely connected together. God is not sometimes merciful and sometimes just, but He is always both, that is to say, His one Character always involves elements of what we call mercy and justice.

It may still be objected that however noble it may have been for Christ to have offered Himself as a sacrifice for man, it hardly seems right for the offer to have been *accepted*. But here we must remember the mysterious union which exists between the Persons of the Trinity. It is the Son Himself Who, in a certain sense, by virtue of His union with the Father, both offers and accepts the offer. While on the other hand, the love of the Father in giving His Son to be a sacrifice for man is emphasised in Scripture, just as much as the love of the Son in freely becoming that Sacrifice. Thus the Father's love for sinful man was the *cause*, and not the effect of Christ's Atonement.

Of course it may be said that this is only shirking a difficulty by having recourse to mysteries. But the answer is obvious. The mystery of the Atonement is an essential part of the doctrine. Christians do not believe in an atonement effected by anyone who was not both God and Man. On the contrary, they assert that no one else could have effected it. It is the position which Christ occupies towards God on the one hand, as being His eternal Son, and towards mankind and the world on the other, as being in a special sense their Creator and Maintainer, which renders Him

the only possible Mediator between the two. Thus He is not an intervening *third* between God and man, any more than man is an intervening *third* between matter and spirit. He is Himself complete God, and complete Man ; *the* Son of God, and *the* Son of Man, to use the striking titles which He adopted ; and therefore in discussing the Christian doctrine, we cannot argue as if He were only a man. To do this would be to destroy its *naturalness* altogether. Nor, on the other hand, must we forget the close union which is said to exist between Christ and His followers, even as close as that between a vine and its branches, or a body and its limbs ; and this, however mysterious it may be, also lessens the difficulty to some extent.¹

One more point has to be noticed under this head. Christ, by His Incarnation, became, in a unique sense, the *Representative* of mankind, since it was human nature and not a human person that He then united to Himself. In the case of ordinary men, this nature is inherited from their parents and developed round a new person ; but in the case of Christ it was inherited from His mother and developed round the pre-existing Person of the Son of God, so that His human nature as such was impersonal. In other words, to quote the Nicene Creed, Christ became *Man*, not *a man*. And the distinction is important, for had He been *a man*, He could not have represented *all* men. But by His taking human nature in the abstract, as we may call it, He represented, as no one else could, the entire race, and He suffered as such ; so that to this extent

¹ John 15. 5 ; Eph. 4. 15-16.

there was a kind of fulfilment of justice. Thus, on the whole, though Christ did not, strictly speaking, bear man's *punishment*, His sufferings and death procured man's *pardon* ; He suffered on our behalf, though not in our stead.

(3.) *As to the sinner.*

Lastly, as to the effect of the willingness of the victim on the sinner. Of course, on the mere substitution theory, justice would be satisfied, and a criminal might sin on as much as he liked, provided he could be sure of finding another substitute when wanted. But if the changed attitude of the judge is due, not to his justice being satisfied, but to his mercy being stimulated, this is plainly conditional on a *moral change* in the sinner himself. A good man suffering for a criminal would not alter our feelings towards him if he obstinately chose to remain a criminal. And this is in exact harmony with the Christian doctrine, which is that sinners cannot expect to avail themselves of Christ's Atonement if they wilfully continue in sin ; so that repentance is a *necessary* condition of forgiveness. This, it is plain, destroys altogether the objection that an atoning sacrifice has an immoral tendency on the sinners themselves ; it has precisely the opposite effect.

And what we should thus expect theoretically has been amply confirmed by experience. No one will deny that Christians in all ages have embraced the doctrine of the Atonement with the utmost devotion. They have asserted that it is the cause of all their joy in this world and all their hope for the next. And yet, so far from having had a bad influence, it has led them to the

most noble and self-sacrificing lives. It has saved them from *sin*, and not only from the penalties of sin, and this is exactly what was required. The greatness of man's sin, and the misery it causes in the world, are but too evident apart from Christianity. And the Atonement was a 'vast remedy for this vast evil.' And if we admit the end, that man had to be redeemed from sin, impressed with the guilt of sin, and helped to resist sin, we cannot deny the appropriateness of the means, which, as a matter of fact, has so often brought it about. This completes a brief examination of the moral objections to the Atonement ; and it is clear that the *willingness* of the Victim makes the whole difference, whether we regard them as referring to the Victim himself, the Judge, or the sinner.

(D.) THE DOCTRINE OF THE RESURRECTION.

The last great Christian doctrine is that of the Resurrection. According to Christianity, all men are to rise again, with their bodies partly changed and rendered incorruptible ; and the Resurrection of Christ's Body was both a pledge of this, and also to some extent an example of what a risen body would be like. He was thus, as the Bible says, the *firstborn* from the dead.¹ Now this word *firstborn* implies, to begin with, that none had been so born before, the cases of Lazarus, etc., being those of *resuscitation* and not *resurrection* ; they lived again to die again, and their bodies were unchanged. And it implies, secondly, that others would be so born afterwards, so that our risen bodies will resemble His. The Resurrection of Christ

¹ 1 Cor. 15. 20 ; Col. 1. 18 ; Rev. 1. 5.

is thus represented not as something altogether exceptional and unique, but rather as the first instance of what will one day be the universal rule. It shows us the last stage in man's long development, what he is intended to become when he is at length perfected. We will therefore consider first Christ's Resurrection, and then man's resurrection.

(I.) *Christ's Resurrection.*

Now according to the Gospels, Christ's Risen Body combined material and immaterial properties in a very remarkable manner. Thus He could be touched and eat food, and yet apparently pass through closed doors and vanish at pleasure ; and this is often thought to be incredible. But though we know very little about *semi-spiritual* substances, that little is enough to show that it is not incredible. For the nearest approach to one of which we have any scientific knowledge is the luminiferous æther, and this also seems to combine spiritual and material properties in a remarkable manner, being in some respects more like a solid than a gas. And yet it can pass through all material substances, and allows them to pass through it without any appreciable resistance. This fact certainly prevents us from saying that it is incredible that Christ's semi-spiritual body should pass through closed doors.

Indeed for all we know, it may be one of the properties of spiritual beings, that they can pass through material substances (just as the Röntgen rays can) and be generally invisible ; and yet be able, if they wish, to assume some of the properties of matter, such as becoming visible or audible. In fact unless they were

able to do this, it is hard to see how they could make themselves manifest at all. And we must remember it is never said that Christ was visible and invisible at *the same time*, which would be a contradiction ; but that He *appeared* to the Apostles, or *showed Himself* to them, and afterwards that He *vanished*, literally *ceased to be seen of them*, all of which imply that He became visible or not at pleasure.

Nor again is there anything incredible in this, for man, we know, does not see all that is to be seen even in nature, *e.g.*, the ultra-violet rays. And a slight alteration in the waves of light coming from a body would make it visible or not to the human eye ; and it is out of the question to say that God—the Omnipotent One—could not produce such a change at pleasure, in a spiritual body. And for a spirit to become tangible, or to take food, is not really more wonderful (though it seems so) than for it to become visible or audible ; since when once we pass the boundary between the natural and the supernatural everything is mysterious.

It may of course be replied that though all this is not perhaps incredible, it is still most improbable ; and no doubt it is. But what then ? We have no adequate means of judging, for the fact if true is, up to the present, unique. It implies a *new* mode of existence which is neither spiritual nor material, and of which we have no experience whatever. And therefore until we receive new powers of apprehension, we are naturally unable to understand what it is like. But assuming the resurrection of Christ to be otherwise credible, as it

certainly is if we admit His Incarnation and Death, we cannot call it incredible merely because the properties of His risen body are alleged to be different from those of ordinary human bodies, and in some respects to resemble those of spirits. It is in fact only what we should expect.

(2.) *Man's Resurrection.*

Next as to man's resurrection. The Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the *body* must not be confused with the immortality of the *spirit*, discussed in Chapter V., which is common to many religions, and is certainly not improbable. But two objections may be made to the resurrection of the body.

The first is that it is *impossible*, since the human body decomposes after death, and its molecules may be subsequently incorporated into other bodies. And thus, if all men were to rise again at the same time, the same molecules might have to be in two places at once. But the fallacy here is obvious, for the molecules composing a man's body are continually changing during life, and it is probable that every one of them is changed in a few years; and yet the identity of the body is not destroyed. This identity depends not on the identity of the molecules, but on their relative position and numbers; so that a man's body is in this respect like a whirlpool in a stream, the water composing which is continually changing, though the whirlpool itself remains. And therefore the resurrection need not be a *resurrection of relics*, as it is sometimes called, and this removes at once the apparent impossibility of the doctrine.

Secondly, it may still be objected that the doctrine is extremely *improbable*. And no doubt it seems so. But once more we have no adequate means of judging. Certainly, that a man who has once lived should be raised to life again is not antecedently more improbable than that he should have lived at all. Indeed the origin of life seems of the two to be the more mysterious. Again, apart from experience, how very improbable it would be that a seed when buried in the ground should develop into a plant ; or that plants and trees, after being apparently dead all through the winter, should blossom again in the spring. Thus everything connected with life is so mysterious that we can decide nothing *a priori*, and experience must be our only guide. And therefore we cannot say what may or may not happen at some future time, of which we have no experience whatever. Indeed, if man's spirit is immortal, the fact that it is associated with a body during its life on this earth makes it not unlikely that it will be associated with a body of some kind during its future life.

And as to the *condition* of man's risen body, that it should be partly spiritual, and thus resemble Christ's risen body, is distinctly probable. And just as man's body in this life is suited to his surroundings here, so we may infer that his future body will be suited to his surroundings hereafter ; though, not knowing what they will be like, we cannot say what his body will be like. But we may be sure of this : the infinite resources of the God of Nature are not baffled by the grave. His Power and Wisdom know no limits ; and

He will be able, if He wishes, to provide man with a body which, having no tendency to decay, will be a suitable instrument for the noblest exertions of his mind and will.

And then as to the position of the future *heaven*. It may be on some other planet, where God will specially manifest His presence, and where sin, pain, and death will be unknown. Or it may be the name for some unseen spiritual state, into which Christ passed when He left this earth, and into which the righteous will pass after the Judgment. And the existence of such a state, perhaps pervading the whole universe, is certainly not incredible. Indeed, the luminiferous æther should convince us that our senses are not able to perceive everything that exists, even in our immediate vicinity. While as to *everlasting life*, when man is not only perfect in himself, and lives in perfect surroundings, but enjoys the immediate presence of God, as well as the society of the perfect, there is nothing inconceivable in his being able to live for ever in perfect happiness. The final state of the *righteous* then presents little difficulty, but what about that of the *wicked*? This is admitted by all to be a most difficult subject, but as Christians themselves are not agreed about it, and we shall have to discuss it fully in Chapter XXIII., we need not consider it at present.

(E.) CONCLUSION.

We have now examined the four great doctrines of Christianity, the others either following directly from these, or not presenting any difficulty. And though,

as we have shown, not one of these doctrines can be pronounced *incredible*, yet some of them, especially the Incarnation and the Atonement, seem so very *improbable* as to raise a strong presumption against the truth of the religion. This must be fully and freely admitted. At the same time, it is only fair to remember that this improbability is distinctly lessened by the following considerations.

Firstly, in regard to all these doctrines we have no *adequate* means of deciding what is or is not probable. Reason cannot judge where it has nothing to judge by ; and apart from Christianity itself, we know next to nothing as to what was God's purpose in creating man. If, then, these doctrines are true, their truth depends not upon reason, but upon revelation. All reason can do is to examine most carefully the evidence in favour of the alleged revelation. Of this we should expect it to be able to judge, but the Christian doctrines themselves are plainly above its jurisdiction. We are hence in a region where we cannot trust to our own sense of the fitness of things. And therefore the Christian doctrines cannot be condemned merely because we think them contrary to our reason.

And it is undeniable that many thoughtful men (including Agnostics) do not consider them so. For instance, the late Professor Huxley wrote in 1877, ' I have not the slightest objection to offer *a priori* to all the propositions of the Three Creeds. The mysteries of the Church are child's play compared with the mysteries of Nature. The doctrine of the Trinity is not more

puzzling than the necessary antinomies' (that is contradictions) 'of physical speculation.'¹

And this leads us on to the next point, which is that many *other* facts which are actually true appear equally improbable on *prima facie* grounds; such, for instance, as the luminiferous æther and the phenomena of growth in the physical world, or the existence of evil and the freedom of man in the moral world. Apart from experience, what an overwhelming argument could be made out against such facts as these; and yet they concern subjects which are to a great extent within our comprehension, whereas Christianity has to do with the nature and character of a Being Who is avowedly beyond our comprehension. May not the difficulties in both cases, but especially in regard to the latter, be due to our *ignorance* only? Very possibly, to understand all the difficulties of Christianity, we should have to understand all the plans and intentions of the Infinite God, which is perhaps in the nature of things impossible for us finite men.

Thirdly, it should be noticed that this *partial* ignorance in regard to Christianity is precisely similar to our partial ignorance in regard to Natural Theology, discussed in Chapter III. We there showed that, though we had not a perfect knowledge of God, we had a sufficient knowledge for all practical purposes. And the same applies to Christianity. The subject does not claim to have been revealed in all its bearings,

¹ Quoted with his permission in Bishop Gore's Bampton Lectures, 1891, p. 247, 1898 edition.

but only in so far as it concerns ourselves. Take, for instance, the doctrine of the Atonement. We are not told how much was God the Father's part, or how much was Christ's part, or the exact relation of these two ; but we are told what must be *our* part, in forsaking sin, etc., if we are to benefit by it. Thus Christianity, like Natural Theology, claims to be a subject which can only be partly and yet sufficiently understood.

Fourthly, it should be noticed that, though individually the Christian doctrines may seem improbable, yet, when considered as a whole, as in all fairness they ought to be, there is a complete harmony between them. Their improbability is not *cumulative*. On the contrary, one often helps to explain the difficulties of another. This has been recognised by most writers, including many who can scarcely be called theologians. For instance, the great Napoleon is reported to have said, ' If once the Divine character of Christ is admitted, Christian doctrine exhibits the precision and clearness of algebra ; so that we are struck with admiration at its scientific connection and unity.'¹

In conclusion, it must be again pointed out that we are only now considering the *credibility* of Christianity, and not trying to make out that it is a probable religion on *a priori* grounds, which it obviously is not. Only its improbability is not so extremely great as to make it useless to consider the evidence in its favour. This is especially so when we reflect that this improbability must have seemed as great, if not greater, when

¹ Beauterne, *Sentiment de Napoleon 1^{er} sur le Christianisme*, new edition, Paris, 1864, p. 110.

Christianity was first preached than it does now, when we are so accustomed to the religion. And yet, as a matter of fact, the evidence in its favour did outweigh every objection, and finally convince the civilised world. What this evidence is we proceed to inquire.

CHAPTER XIV.

THAT THE FOUR GOSPELS ARE AUTHENTIC FROM EXTERNAL TESTIMONY.

(A.) PRELIMINARY OBJECTION.

That many critics have decided against the Gospels, but this is easily accounted for, as they reject the Supernatural altogether.

(B.) THE UNDISPUTED TESTIMONY.

End of second century : Irenæus, and the Muratorian Canon. This evidence retrospective, and of great value.

(C.) THE ALMOST UNDISPUTED TESTIMONY.

(1.) Justin Martyr, A.D. 150. He refers to publicly read Apostolic *Memoirs*, which must have been our Synoptic Gospels, as the same events are alluded to, though the quotations are not accurate ; and probably included the Fourth Gospel.

(2.) Tatian, Justin's disciple, A.D. 175, wrote the Diatessaron or harmony of Four Gospels.

(3.) Marcian, A.D. 140, wrote a Gospel based on St. Luke's.

(D.) THE DISPUTED TESTIMONY.

(1.) The Apocryphal Gospel of St. Peter, later than our Four, and yet previous to Justin.

(2.) Papias : mentions first two Gospels by name, and probably knew of the others.

(3.) Aristides : alludes to some Gospel as well known.

(4.) The Apostolic Fathers : Polycarp, Ignatius, Clement, Barnabas, and the Teaching of the Twelve, seem to contain references to our Gospels.

HAVING shown in the last chapter that the Christian Religion is *credible*, we have next to consider what

evidence there is in its favour. Now that it was founded on the alleged teaching and miracles of Christ, and chiefly on His Resurrection, is admitted by everyone. So we must first examine whether we have any trustworthy testimony as to these events; more especially whether the Four Gospels, which appear to contain such testimony, are authentic. By the *Four Gospels*, it need scarcely be remarked, we mean those commonly ascribed to SS. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; and by their being *authentic*, or *genuine*, we mean that they were in the main, and excluding doubtful passages, written or compiled by those persons. Whether the events they record are *true* is of course another question, which will be examined later on: at present we are dealing with their authenticity only. And there is an important objection to be considered at starting.

(A.) PRELIMINARY OBJECTION.

This is that the authenticity of the Four Gospels, or indeed of any Books of the Bible, can only be decided by *specialists*; that is to say, by men who have made a special study of the subject, and are well acquainted with the languages in which the Books were written. And that therefore, as a large number of these critics—extremely able men—have decided *against* their authenticity, this ought to settle the question. And if it could only be replied that equally able men have decided the other way, the ordinary reader might well think that for him to try and examine the evidence, and judge between them, was mere waste of time.

But it so happens that there is a satisfactory answer

to this objection. It is that the chief critics, who deny the authenticity of the Four Gospels (and most of the other Books of the Bible) are all *Rationalists*, that is to say, men who reject the supernatural altogether. A miracle is to them *incredible*. Trustworthy testimony to it is of course equally so, and hence those books of the Bible which, if authentic, would contain such testimony, must of necessity be not authentic. This principle has been admitted, either directly or indirectly, by all the leading writers of this school, such as Baur and Strauss in Germany, Renan in France, and the author of 'Supernatural Religion' in England, some of whom state it with surprising candour.

Thus *Baur* says, 'The main argument for the later date of our Gospels is, after all, this—that they, one by one, and still more collectively, exhibit so much out of the life of Jesus in a way which is impossible,' *i.e.*, miraculous, as the context clearly shows.¹ Here it will be noticed the foregone conclusion that miracles are impossible is made the chief argument for saying the Gospels which record them are not authentic.

Next as to *Strauss*. He expresses his agreement with critics who adopt 'the fundamental conviction that everything that happens, or ever happened, happened naturally ; that even the most distinguished of men was still man ; and that consequently the supernatural colouring in the accounts of early Christianity must be adventitious and unreal.' Again he says, 'In the person and acts of Jesus no supernaturalism shall be suffered to remain.' And quite consistently he

¹ Critical Enquiry as to the Gospels, Tübingen, 1847, p. 530.

declares that none of the Gospels can be truly and fully historical, 'for the simple reason that they contain supernaturalism.'¹

Passing on to *Renan*, he is equally precise, for though he denies that a miracle is impossible, he certainly considers it incredible. His words are, 'Till we have new light, we shall maintain, therefore, this principle of historical criticism, that a supernatural relation cannot be accepted as such, that it always implies credulity or imposture, that the duty of the historian is to interpret it, and to seek what portion of truth and what portion of error it may contain. Such are the rules which have been followed in the composition of this Life.' Again he says, speaking of the Gospels being in part legendary, 'That is evident, since they are full of miracles and the supernatural.'²

So, again, the author of 'Supernatural Religion' says, when speaking of miracles, 'There are the strongest reasons for affirming that such phenomena are antecedently incredible.' And again, 'Both the supernatural religion, therefore, and its supernatural evidence labour under the fatal disability of being antecedently incredible.' And again, speaking of Christ's resurrection, 'The belief that a dead man rose from the dead and appeared to several persons alive, is at once disposed of upon abstract grounds. The alleged occurrence is contrary to universal experience.'³

¹ Strauss, *New Life of Jesus*. Authorised translation. London, 1865, pp. x, xii, 34.

² *Renan's Life of Jesus*, translated by Wilbour. New York, 1864, pp. 17, 44, 45.

³ *Supernatural Religion*, 2nd edit., 1874-77, pp. 78, 94; vol. iii., p. 522.

These quotations, which are mere samples of numbers that might be given, show clearly that the rejection of the supernatural is the basis from which these writers start. But to assume that miracles are incredible, and that therefore authentic evidence to them is equally so, is to give up the critical and historical argument altogether. We do not of course mean that critical and historical objections are not relied on at all. They are to some extent ; but they are more like *excuses* than *reasons*, the real reason for disputing the books being in every case an antecedent objection to the miraculous events recorded. And then, starting with this, they search for any slight evidence that can be found, either critical or historical, for proving it. Such a method of arguing has been happily described as *a conclusion in search of its premises* ; and it is needless to add that, in a case of this sort, premises of some kind are generally found.

Under these circumstances we need not discuss further the objection that many specialists have decided against the authenticity of the Gospels. Fortunately their opponents, who maintain the genuineness of these books, can afford to lay aside all arguments founded on their own views as to the supernatural, and rely only on critical evidence.

We have now to examine what this evidence is ; first considering the *external testimony* borne by early Christian writers to the Four Gospels, and reserving *the internal evidence* from the Books themselves for the next chapter. It may be mentioned at starting that we have no complete manuscripts of the Gospels

earlier than the beginning of the fourth century ; but there is nothing surprising in this, as for the first two centuries books were generally written on *papyrus*, an extremely fragile material. And therefore, with the exception of some fragments preserved in Egypt, all documents of this period, whether Christian or classical, have entirely perished. A much more durable material, *vellum*, began to supplant papyrus in the third century, but did not come into common use till the fourth. Moreover, during the persecutions, which occurred at intervals up to the fourth century, all Christian *writings* were specially sought for, and destroyed ; indeed, their mere possession involved such great danger that many preferred not to have them. And therefore the absence of earlier manuscripts though very unfortunate, is not perhaps unnatural ; and it is anyhow no worse than in the case of classical authors. I have seen it stated, for instance, that there are no manuscripts of either Cicero, Cæsar, or Tacitus within 800 years of their time.

It of course raises a doubt as to whether we have the original *text* of our Gospels. But the numerous references in early Christian writers show that this cannot affect more than a few verses ; so all it can do is to make us careful not to base too much on a *single passage*. And certainly the defenders of Christianity have nothing to fear from such a restriction, as the arguments in its favour never depend on single passages, though the difficulties connected with it often do.

(B.) THE UNDISPUTED TESTIMONY.

Fortunately we need not begin later than the end of

the second century, since it is admitted by everyone that our Four Gospels were then well known throughout the Church. They were continually quoted by Christian writers ; they were universally ascribed to the authors we now ascribe them to ; and they were always considered to be in some sense divinely inspired.

As this is undisputed, we need not discuss the evidence in detail ; but one writer deserves to be mentioned, because his testimony is retrospective, and proves far more than the mere fact that the Gospels were well known in his time. This is *Irenæus* of Lyons, whose works date from about A.D. 185 ; and he not only quotes the Gospels frequently (about 500 times altogether, of which 100 are from the Fourth Gospel), but assigns them to the same Evangelists as we do now. Moreover he shows there were only *four* of acknowledged authority, since the fanciful analogies he gives for this, likening the four Gospels to the four rivers in Paradise, and the four quarters of the globe, render it certain that the fact of there being four, neither more nor less, must have been undisputed in his day. And he distinctly implies that this had been so from the beginning. And as he was not a mere private individual, but an important bishop, who had travelled much, his testimony has an official character, and may be said to represent that of the Church.

And what makes it still more valuable is that he had such excellent means of knowing the truth. He was born in Asia Minor (probably about A.D. 130) and brought up under Polycarp ; and he himself tells us in after life how well he remembered his

teacher. 'I can even describe the place where the blessed Polycarp used to sit and discourse—his going out, too, and his coming in—his general mode of life and personal appearance, together with the discourses which he delivered to the people ; also how he would speak of his familiar intercourse with John, and with the rest of those who had seen the Lord ; and how he would call their words to remembrance. Whatsoever things he had heard from them respecting the Lord, both with regard to His miracles and His teaching, Polycarp having thus received (information) from the eye-witnesses of the Word of Life, would recount them all in harmony with the Scriptures.'¹

The importance of this passage can scarcely be exaggerated ; for in the mouth of Irenæus, the *Scriptures*, which contain an account of Christ's miracles and teaching, can only mean the Four Gospels ; and thus we have in Polycarp a very early witness to these. And it has also a special bearing on the authorship of the Fourth Gospel. For is it conceivable that Irenæus, who quotes it so often, would have ascribed it to St. John unless it had been mentioned to him as such by Polycarp ? Or is it conceivable that Polycarp, who personally knew St. John, could have been deceived by a forgery ? The difficulties of either alternative, when carefully considered, will be seen to be enormous ; and yet there is no other, unless we admit that St. John was the author.

It should also be noticed that Irenæus, when dis-

¹ Irenæus, Fragment of Epistle to Florinus. The translations here and elsewhere are from the Ante-Nicene Christian Library.

cussing two alternative readings of Rev. 13. 18, supports one of them by saying that it is found *in all the most approved and ancient copies* ; and was also maintained by men *who saw John face to face*.¹ He had thus some idea as to the value of evidence : and it is most unlikely that he should have written as he did about the Four Gospels, unless he had seen equally approved and ancient copies of them.

Before passing on, we must just glance at the *Muratorian Canon*. This is the earliest known list of New Testament books, and appears to have been written about A.D. 175. The first part is lost ; the portion that remains commences in the middle of a sentence evidently referring to St. Mark's Gospel. It then goes on to 'The third Book of the Gospel, that of Luke.' It then mentions 'The Fourth Gospel, that of John,' then the Acts of the Apostles by Luke, and then the remaining books of our present New Testament, except the Epistle to the Hebrews, giving a few notes about each. It also mentions various apocryphal works, but distinguishes between these and the canonical ones, saying that the latter were inspired. From all this it is clear that towards the close of the second century, our Four Gospels held much the same position among Christians as they do at present. And this alone raises a strong presumption in favour of their authenticity.

(C.) THE ALMOST UNDISPUTED TESTIMONY.

We next come to the testimony of some earlier writers, which was formerly much disputed, but is now practically admitted by all critics.

¹ Iren. 5. 30.

(I.) *Justin Martyr.*

By far the most important of these is *Justin Martyr*; and this importance is due to the fact that three of his writings, two Apologies and a Dialogue, have come down to us, which are admittedly genuine, and long enough to argue from with some confidence. And that he refers to our Gospels is now *almost undisputed*. His works date from about A.D. 145-150, the first Apology being addressed to the Emperor Antoninus (138-161). Moreover, he was no ordinary convert, but a philosopher, and says himself that prior to embracing Christianity he had studied various philosophical systems and found them unsatisfactory; so we may be sure that he did not accept Christianity without making similar inquiries as to the facts on which it rested.¹ And as his father and grandfather were natives of Palestine, where he was born (probably about A.D. 114), he must have had good means of finding out the truth.

Now Justin does not allude to any of the Evangelists by name, but he frequently quotes from the '*Memoirs of the Apostles*,' which he says were sometimes called *Gospels*,² and were publicly read and expounded in the churches, together with the Old Testament Prophets. And he gives no hint that this was a local or recent practice, but implies that it was the universal and well-established custom. These *Memoirs*, he tells us,³ were written by the *Apostles and their followers*, which exactly describes our present Gospels, two of which are ascribed to Apostles (Matthew and John), and the other two to their immediate followers (Mark and Luke). And con-

¹ Dial., 2.² Apol. I. 66; Dial., 100.³ Dial., 103.

sidering that Justin was writing for unbelievers, not Christians, there is nothing strange in his not mentioning the names of the individual writers. In the same way Tertullian never once names the Evangelists in his Apology, which is addressed to heathens, though he often does so in his writings addressed to Christians.

Now Justin gives about sixty quotations from these Memoirs, and they describe precisely those events in the life of Christ recorded in our first three, commonly called the *Synoptic*, Gospels, and with scarcely any addition. Indeed, out of all Justin's references to the events of Christ's life, whether quotations or not, of which there are over two hundred, only four refer to events not now found in our Gospels. This is very remarkable, and seems to show that even at this early time our Gospels were the only recognised sources of information.

For example, we may take the events of Christ's birth and childhood. As is well known, the apocryphal Gospels were very diffuse on this subject ; but the events mentioned by Justin have been carefully collected, and are found to consist merely of these : that Christ was descended from Abraham, through Jacob, Judah, Phares, Jesse, and David ;¹ that the Angel Gabriel announced His birth to the Virgin Mary ; that this was a fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah ; that Joseph was forbidden in a vision to put away his espoused wife ; that Christ's birth at Bethlehem had

¹ Justin names these persons as the ancestors of the Virgin Mary, but she, as well as Joseph, may have been descended from David.

been foretold by Micah ; that His parents went thither from Nazareth, where they dwelt, in consequence of the enrolment of Quirinius ; that as they could not find a lodging in the village they lodged in *a cave* close by, where Christ was born, and laid in a manger ; that while there wise men from *Arabia*, guided by a star, worshipped Him and offered Him gold, frankincense, and myrrh, and by revelation were commanded not to return to Herod, to whom they had first come ; that He was called Jesus, as the Saviour of His people ; that by the command of God His parents fled with Him to Egypt for fear of Herod, and remained there till Archelaus succeeded him ; and that Herod, being deceived by the wise men, slew the infants at Bethlehem, so that the prophecy of Jeremiah was fulfilled, as to Rachel weeping for her children.

With the exception of the two words in italics, there is no addition to our present Gospels here ; and any ordinary reader would at once conclude that Justin was quoting from them. There is, however, this difficulty. Scarcely any of the quotations are verbally accurate, and it has been urged in consequence that Justin must have been quoting from some *Lost Gospel*. But this theory is hardly tenable. For Justin sometimes quotes the same passage differently, clearly showing that he was relying on his memory ; and had not looked up the reference, which in those days of manuscripts, without concordances, must have been a tedious process. Also when quoting the Old Testament, he is almost equally inaccurate ; though none will deny that he both knew it, and intended to quote

it. While later Christian writers, such as Irenæus, who avowedly quoted from our Gospels, are also inaccurate in small details. And it must be remembered that until printing was introduced, no two copies of a book were exactly alike, as even the most careful scribes would make a few mistakes ; and this also may explain some of the verbal differences.

We need not therefore assume a *Lost Gospel* to account for Justin's quotations ; though, if we do, it does not materially affect the argument, since of necessity this *Lost Gospel* must have contained a precisely similar account of Christ's life to that in our Synoptic ones. And this is, after all, the important point—not when or by whom were the Gospels written, but whether the facts they record are *true*. And this must depend on whether the immediate followers of Christ, who had ample means of knowing, believed them to be true. And an earlier *Lost Gospel*, if it recorded *the same facts*, would be as valuable evidence of this as our present ones. But there is practically no doubt that Justin was quoting from these Gospels.

But with regard to the *Fourth Gospel*, the case is different, since there are far fewer apparent references to it in Justin. He seems, however, to have known it, since its phraseology, and to some extent its doctrines, are distinct from the other three, and yet they are reproduced by Justin. Thus his *phraseology* is so similar in some cases as to amount to a quotation. For instance : ' Christ also said, Except ye be born again, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Now, that it

is impossible for those who have once been born to enter into their mother's womb is manifest to all.' And ' He [John the Baptist] cried to them, I am not the Christ, but the voice of one crying ; for He that is stronger than I shall come, Whose shoes I am not worthy to bear.'¹

Again, the *doctrines* taught by Justin regarding the pre-existence and divinity of Christ, the sacrament of Baptism, and some others, are precisely such as are found in the Fourth Gospel and nowhere else. For example,² ' The first power after God the Father and Lord of all is the Word, Who is also the Son ; and of Him we will, in what follows, relate how He took flesh and became man.' And again, ' The Word of wisdom, Who is Himself this God begotten of the Father of all things.' It has been suggested that Justin derived these doctrines from the Greek Jew Philo, born about B.C. 20, in whose writings the Divine Word or *Logos* is often alluded to. And some have even thought that the Fourth Gospel itself may have been indebted to Philo. But its great doctrine, that of the Incarnation, or that the *Word became flesh*, which is reproduced by Justin, is never hinted at by Philo, or any other philosopher, and this separates the two systems entirely. The *Logos* of Philo is a kind of Intermediate Being, who is neither God nor man ; while the *Logos* of Christianity is both. Moreover, as Justin in his Dialogue was arguing with a Jew, he would probably have mentioned Philo if quoting from him.

¹ Apol. 1. 61 ; Dial., 88 ; John 3. 3-5 ; 1. 20-27.

² Apol. 1. 32 ; Dial., 61.

(2.) *Tatian.*

To the above evidence must be added that of Justin's disciple, *Tatian*, and this seems conclusive. He wrote a book about A.D. 175, recently discovered, called the *Diatessaron*, which, as its name implies, was a kind of harmony of *Four* Gospels. It was based chiefly on St. Matthew's, the events peculiar to the others being introduced in various places. And its special value in our present inquiry is that it commences with the sentence, *In the beginning was the Word*, etc., which is the opening clause of the Fourth Gospel. And this shows that that Gospel must not only have been in circulation, but of acknowledged authority, in Justin's time, and renders it almost certain that he derived these quotations and doctrines from it, and not from some purely imaginary source.

We can now sum up the evidence of Justin. He shows that in the middle of the second century—and his memory was probably good for thirty years earlier—certain Apostolic *Memoirs* or *Gospels* were publicly read in the churches, and were evidently considered of great authority. And everything points to these being the same Gospels which were known and quoted throughout the Church towards the close of the century. Indeed, it is hardly conceivable that in such a short time a new set of Gospels could have been introduced, and the older ones immediately forgotten, so that Irenæus, for instance, could have written as he did about there being only four.

(3.) *Marcion.*

Another most important witness is Marcion. He

wrote, not later than A.D. 140, a kind of Gospel, so similar to St. Luke's that one was evidently based on the other. And that St. Luke's is the earlier is now admitted by critics of all schools, including the author of 'Supernatural Religion' in the third and subsequent editions of his book ; though he had before tried to prove the opposite. And therefore as St. Matthew and St. Mark are generally allowed to be earlier than St. Luke, this shows that *all* our Synoptic Gospels were in circulation before A.D. 140 ; which makes it still more certain that Justin, who wrote some years later, got his quotations from these Gospels. And if so, their want of verbal accuracy, so far from being an adverse argument, is just the opposite, for it shows that similar discrepancies in other writers do not disprove that they were quoting from our Gospels.

(D.) THE DISPUTED TESTIMONY.

We pass on now to the testimony of still earlier writers, all of which is more or less disputed by some critics.

(I.) *The Apocryphal Gospel of St. Peter.*

And first as to the Gospel of St. Peter. The existence of this work (like that of Tatian) has long been known through references to it in early writers, but only recently (1887) has a portion of the work itself been discovered. This is about as long as a single chapter in our Gospels, and contains a brief narrative of events from the washing of Pilate's hands to the return of the disciples to Galilee after the Resurrection. The work was evidently known to Justin, so it cannot be later than A.D. 140. It seems to be rather a careless com-

pilation from our four Gospels, as it mentions very few facts that are not recorded there, though it often distorts them, and puts them in a different order.

Its special value lies in its witness to the Fourth Gospel, since it mentions several points which are peculiar to that Gospel ; such as the legs of the malefactors being broken, though not apparently those of Christ Himself, the place where He was buried being called a *garden*, and the Crucifixion taking place *before* ' the first day of Unleavened Bread,' in which respect it seems to differ from the Synoptics. And hence it follows that the Fourth Gospel, like the other three, must have been well known, and of recognised authority at that time.

(2.) *Papias*.

Next as to Papias. He was bishop of Hierapolis in Asia Minor early in the second century, and only a few fragments of his writings have been preserved by Irenæus and Eusebius. We learn from the former that he was a disciple of St. John and a companion of Polycarp ; and considering that Irenæus was himself Polycarp's pupil, there is no reason to doubt this.¹ But these fragments have been the cause of great controversy. Papias tells us himself what were his sources of information : ' If, then, anyone who had attended on the elders came, I asked minutely after their sayings,— what Andrew or Peter said, or what was said by Philip, or by Thomas, or by James, or by John, or by Matthew, or by any other of the Lord's disciples : which things Aristion and the presbyter John, the disciples of the

¹ Irenæus, Bk. 5. 33.

Lord, say. For I imagined that what was to be got from books was not so profitable to me as what came from the living and abiding voice.'

He had thus the best possible means of knowing, and his testimony to the first two Gospels is explicit. He says, 'Matthew put together the oracles in the Hebrew language, and each one interpreted them as best he could.' And 'Mark, having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately whatsoever he remembered. It was not, however, in exact order that he related the sayings or deeds of Christ. For he neither heard the Lord nor accompanied Him. But afterwards, as I said, he accompanied Peter.'¹

Papias, it will be noticed, does not state whether St. Mark wrote during St. Peter's lifetime or afterwards; and early authorities are divided on the subject; Irenæus being generally quoted as saying that it was after St. Peter's death, while Clement of Alexandria, who wrote at the close of the second century, says it was during his lifetime.² This latter is the more probable (see Chapter XVI.), especially as Irenæus seems to have been misunderstood in the matter.³

But Eusebius gives no quotations from Papias concerning the last two Gospels; and from this we may perhaps infer that he knew nothing as to the composition of these Gospels, similar to what he did about the first two. But to conclude, as some critics do, that Papias had never heard of the books in question, is

¹ Eusebius, *Hist.*, iii. 39; 1 Pet. 5. 13.

² Irenæus, *Bk. 3. 1*; Eusebius, *Hist.*, ii. 15, vi. 14.

³ *Journal of Theological Studies*, July, 1905.

quite unjustified. It is based on a misunderstanding of a passage in Eusebius.¹ He does not here say that he will mention *every* reference in earlier writers to the New Testament scriptures, but only their allusion to the *disputed* books of his time (A.D. 315), and what they said about the canonical ones. And judging by those writers whose works are still extant, this is exactly what he has done. For instance, he quotes what Irenæus says about the Gospels and the Revelation, and also that he quoted 1 John, 1 Peter, and the Shepherd of Hermas, which latter he accepted as canonical ; but not a word is said about his having used the Acts and St. Paul's Epistles. Yet as a matter of fact he does so frequently. Plainly Eusebius did not mention this because he took it for granted that every Christian acknowledged these writings. And therefore it is quite possible for Papias to have used, or even quoted, the third and fourth Gospels, without Eusebius mentioning it.

Whether he actually did so cannot of course be decided, unless his works should be rediscovered ; but there are slight indications that he knew them. For instance, the order in which he names the Apostles—Andrew, Peter, and Philip—is not that of their importance, nor are they ever mentioned in that order in the Synoptics, but it is the order in which their calling is described in the fourth Gospel.

(3.) *Aristides.*

Next as to Aristides. He was a philosopher at Athens, and addressed an Apology to the Roman

¹ Eusebius, Hist., iii. 3.

Emperor, Hadrian, about A.D. 125, which was re-discovered in 1889. He has no *quotation* from the Gospels, but what is perhaps equally important, he gives a summary of Christian doctrine, including the Divinity, Incarnation, Virgin-Birth, Resurrection and Ascension of Christ ; and says that it is *taught in the Gospel*, where men can *read* it for themselves ; which clearly shows that some well-known biography of Christ containing this teaching was then in existence.

(4.) *The Apostolic Fathers.*

The last group of writers to be examined are those who lived soon after the Apostles. The chief of these are *Polycarp* of Smyrna, the disciple of St. John, martyred in A.D. 155, when he had been a Christian 86 years ; *Ignatius* of Antioch, martyred in his old age, about A.D. 110 ; *Clement* of Rome, probably the companion of St. Paul,¹ and the writers of the so-called *Epistle of Barnabas*, and *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*. Their dates are not known for certain, but it is now generally admitted by Rationalists as well as Christians that they all wrote before A.D. 120. Thus the *Encyclopædia Biblica* (article *Gospels*) dates their works, Polycarp 110 ; Ignatius (7 Epistles) before 110 ; Clement 95 ; Barnabas, probably in first century ; Teaching 80-110.

Now none of these writers mention the Gospels by *name* ; but this is no argument to show that they were not quoting them, because the same writers, when admittedly quoting St. Paul's Epistles, also do so at times without reference or acknowledgment. And

¹ Phil. 4. 3.

later Christian writers do precisely the same ; the Gospels are often not quoted by name, but their language and phraseology are continually employed, much as they are by clergymen when preaching at the present day. If, then, we find in these writers passages similar to those in our Gospels, the inference is that they are quoting from them ; and, as a matter of fact, we do find such passages, though they are not numerous. A single example may be given from each.

‘ But being mindful of what the Lord said in His teaching : Judge not, that ye be not judged ; forgive, and it shall be forgiven unto you ; be merciful, that ye may obtain mercy ; with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again ; and once more, Blessed are the poor, and those that are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of God.’¹

‘ For I know that after His Resurrection also, He was still possessed of flesh, and I believe that He is so now. When, for instance, He came to those who were with Peter, He said to them, “ Lay hold, handle Me, and see that I am not an incorporeal spirit.” ’²

‘ Remember the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, how He said, Woe to that man ! It were better for him that he had never been born, than that he should cast a stumbling-block before one of my elect. Yea, it were better for him that a millstone should be hung about (his neck), and he should be sunk in the depths

¹ Polycarp, ch. ii. ; Luke 6. 36-38 ; Matt. 5. 3, 10.

² Ignatius to Smyrnæans, ch. iii. ; Luke 24. 39.

of the sea, than that he should cast a stumbling-block before one of my little ones.'¹

'Let us beware lest we be found, as it is written, Many are called, but few are chosen.'²

'Having said beforehand all these things, baptize ye in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost in living water.'³

The passage from Barnabas deserves special mention, since here we have words which only occur in our Gospels, introduced with the phrase *as it is written*, which is only used of Scripture quotations. And this shows conclusively that at the time of the writer some Gospel containing these words must have been well known, and considered of high authority. And the attempts to explain away this quotation as from the second Book of Esdras,⁴ where the words are, 'There be many created, but few shall be saved;' or as an error on the part of the writer, who fancied they came somewhere in the Old Testament, are quite inadmissible. And the Teaching of the Twelve, it may be added, also refers more than once to what is *commanded in the Gospel*, mentioning among other matters the Lord's Prayer.⁵

But it may be said, may not all these quotations be from some *Lost Gospel*? Of course they may. It is always possible to refer quotations not to the only book in which we know they do occur, but to some imaginary book in which they might occur. There is, however,

¹ Clement, ch. xlv. ; Luke 17. 1, 2.

² Barnabas, ch. iv. ; Matt. 22. 14.

³ Teaching, ch. vii. ; Matt. 28. 19.

⁴ 2 Esdr. 8. 3.

⁵ Teaching, ch. viii., xi., xv.

no need to do so in this case, as all the evidence points the other way. Though, as said before, even if we do it does not materially affect the argument ; for though it weakens the evidence for our Gospels, it rather increases that for the facts which they record.

Suppose, for instance, the passage in Ignatius was not taken from St. Luke's, but from some *Lost Gospel*. It could not then be cited to show that St. Luke's Gospel was known to Ignatius, but it would afford additional evidence that Christ really did rise from the dead, that when He appeared to His Apostles, they at first thought it was a spirit ; and that He took the obvious means of convincing them, by asking them to handle His Body. All this would then be vouched for not only by St. Luke's Gospel, but also by some *other* early Christian writing, which as Ignatius quotes it in A.D. 110 must certainly have been written within the first century, and must certainly have been considered by him as conclusive evidence ; for he is careful to distinguish between what he thus *knows* (that Christ had a Body after His Resurrection) and what he merely *believes* (that He has one now). And the same applies in other cases.

And if it be further urged that these writers would have referred more frequently to the Gospels, if they really knew them, we must remember that their writings are generally short, and that while a single quotation proves the prior existence of the document quoted, ten pages without a quotation do not disprove it. Moreover we can test this argument by seeing how soon important classical works are quoted ; and the result

is surprising, since (as far as we know) those of Herodotus are only quoted once, and those of Thucydides not at all, within a hundred years of their appearance.¹

Lastly, it must be noticed that when these writers refer to the sayings of Christ or the events of His life, they always do so without the slightest hesitation, as if it were acknowledged truth. And these events include all the more important facts about Christ, such as His Pre-existence and Divinity, His Incarnation and Virgin-Birth, His Epiphany and Baptism, His Crucifixion and Resurrection, His Ascension and Future Coming in Judgment. Moreover, as we have seen, their allusions are often introduced with the words *remember* or *be mindful*, clearly showing that they expected their readers to know them already. Hence some books must have then existed which were well known, containing a life of Christ; and the improbability of these having perished, and a fresh set of Gospels having been published in a few years, is very great. While the later the date we assign to our Gospels, the less likely is it for them to have been at once accepted by the whole Church. And this is confirmed by the fact that none of the apocryphal Gospels, which were later inventions, could ever obtain universal acceptance.

We may now sum up the *external testimony* to the Four Gospels. It shows that at the beginning of the second century they were well known to Christian writers, and this alone would necessitate their composition in the first century, or at all events before

¹ Rawlinson, Bampton Lectures, 1860, p. 379.

A.D. 110. And thanks to recent discoveries, this is now admitted by many leading rationalists, such as Harnack. It may indeed be considered as one of the definite results of recent controversies. But if we admit this, the uniform tradition of the Church, and the entire absence of any counter-testimony, make it probable that they were actually written by the Evangelists to whom they have been universally ascribed. We have thus very strong external testimony in favour of the authenticity of the Four Gospels.

CHAPTER XV.

THAT THE GOSPELS ARE AUTHENTIC FROM INTERNAL EVIDENCE.

(A.) THEIR GENERAL ACCURACY.

This is shown by secular history, where they can be tested.

(B.) THE THREE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS.

- (1.) Their sources ; the triple tradition ; other early documents.
- (2.) Their apparent truthfulness ; numerous indications of this.
- (3.) Their probable date ; before the destruction of Jerusalem, say, A.D. 50-70.

(C.) THE FOURTH GOSPEL.

- (1.) Its authorship. The writer appears to have been a Jew, living in the first century, and an eye-witness of what he describes ; hence probably St. John.
- (2.) Its connection with the other Gospels. It was meant to supplement them ; while the alleged difference in Christ's character favours its authenticity.
- (3.) Its connection with the Book of Revelation. This admitted to be by St. John, and there are no valid reasons for the Gospel being by a different author.

HAVING decided in the last chapter that the Four Gospels are probably authentic from *external testimony*, we pass on now to the *internal evidence*, which, it will be seen, strongly supports this conclusion. For convenience we will first consider their general accuracy

and then examine the Three Synoptic Gospels and the Fourth Gospel separately ; as they are of a somewhat different character.

(A.) THEIR GENERAL ACCURACY. -

It is now admitted by everyone that the writers show a thorough acquaintance with Palestine both as to its geography, history, and people, especially the political and social state of the country in the half-century preceding the fall of Jerusalem (A.D. 70). The Jewish historian Josephus, who wrote about A.D. 95, gives us a vivid description of this ; and everything we read in the Gospels is in entire agreement with it. And this is the more important because the country was then in a very anomalous condition. It was not like an ordinary Roman province, but had been allowed to retain a certain amount of independence. And yet this *double* system of government, half Roman, half Jewish, which only existed up to the fall of Jerusalem, is implied all through the Gospels. And this alone shows that they must have been written by men familiar with Palestine, and well acquainted with the time in question.

With regard to the actual events described, we have, as a rule, no other account, but where we have, their accuracy is fully confirmed. Take, for instance, the puzzling changes in the Government of Palestine. Within fifty years this was a single kingdom under Herod the Great (up to B.C. 4) ; a set of principalities under various tetrarchs, one of whom, Archelaus, had the title of King (up to A.D. 6), a country consisting partly of such principalities, and partly a Roman pro-

vince under procurators like Pilate (up to A.D. 41) ; a kingdom united again under Herod Agrippa I. (up to A.D. 44) ; and the whole finally reduced to a Roman province (after A.D. 44). And yet everyone of these changes, though mentioned quite incidentally, is correctly referred to in the Gospels or Acts.¹

More important than these, however, are several *slight* points of agreement, which none but a contemporary was likely to have known. Among such may be mentioned the importance assigned by the Pharisees to their *traditions* ; the mention of the *didrachma*, or tribute-money voluntarily paid for the support of the Temple, which St. Matthew does not think to need explanation, though Josephus does ; the strange fact that the term high priest was applied to *two persons* at the same time, which was incorrect according to Jewish law ; the publicans or tax-collectors for the Romans being often *Jews* ; the *ill-feeling* of the Samaritans towards the Jews ; and the position *Pilate* occupied as a Roman governor to the Jewish courts.²

In all these cases the accuracy of the narrative is directly confirmed by Josephus or other sources, though it is obvious that many of them are not likely to have been known to a late writer ; especially after the destruction of Jerusalem, which completely changed everything in Palestine. Of course combined with all this accuracy, there are a few instances of alleged

¹ Matt. 2. 1, 22 ; Luke 3. 1 ; Acts 12. 1 ; 23. 24 ; Josephus, Wars, . 20, 33 ; ii. 6 ; Antiq., xviii. 1 ; Wars, xix. 5, 9.

² Matt. 15. 3 ; 17. 24 ; Luke 3. 2 ; 5. 27 ; 9. 53 ; 23. 7 ; comp. Josephus, Antiq., xiii. 10 ; xviii. 9 ; Wars, ii. 12, 14 ; Antiq., xx. 6, 9.

inaccuracy. Three are commonly urged. The first two are mere slips, perhaps due to a copyist, in calling Zachariah the son of Barachiah ; and in referring a prophecy to Jeremiah instead of Zechariah.¹ The other is the enrolment under *Quirinius*. According to St. Luke² this occurred while Herod was king, and therefore not later than what we now call B.C. 4, when Herod died ; whereas, according to Josephus and other authorities, Quirinius was Governor of Syria some years after Herod's death, and carried out his taxing in A.D. 6.

This used to be thought one of the most glaring blunders in the Bible, but modern discoveries have shown that it is probably correct. To begin with, an inscription was found at Tivoli in 1764 which shows that Quirinius was *twice* Governor of Syria, the former time being probably during the reign of Herod, so there is very likely an end of that difficulty, though it must be admitted the dates do not seem satisfactory. Next it will be noticed that St. Luke expressly says that this was the *first* enrolment (R.V.), implying that he knew of others ; and recent discoveries in Egypt (1896-98) have confirmed this in a remarkable manner. For they have shown that it was the custom of the Romans to have a *periodical* enrolment of that country (and therefore presumably of the adjacent country of Syria) every fourteen years. The actual census papers have been found for A.D. 20, 48, 62, 76, etc., and it is

¹ Matt. 23. 35 ; 27. 9 ; 2 Chron. 24. 20 ; Zech. 1. 1 ; 11. 12.

² Luke 2. 2. See Ramsay, 'Was Christ born at Bethlehem?' 1899.

extremely probable, though it cannot be proved for certain, that the system started in B.C. 9-8.

It is also probable that the first enrolment may have been delayed a few years in Palestine, which was partly independent, and that to make it as little unpopular as possible, Herod had it carried out in the Jewish manner, genealogically, each family going to its own city as described by St. Luke. Perhaps, however, this was the usual custom, as a rescript has been recently discovered in Egypt, dated in the 7th year of Trajan (A.D. 104), ordering all persons to return to their own districts in view of the approaching census.¹ The next census in A.D. 6 was not apparently carried out in this way, and it led to a rebellion, and therefore it alone was thought worthy of notice by Josephus. St. Luke, it may be added, seems to have known of this second census;² but he also knew, what his critics did not, that it was only one of a series, and that the *first* of the series took place at an earlier date.

Curiously enough, there used to be a very similar error, charged against St. Luke, in regard to Lysanias; who he says was tetrarch of Abilene (near Damascus) in the fifteenth year of Tiberius, about A.D. 27.³ And yet the only ruler of this name known to history in those parts was killed in B.C. 34. But an inscription discovered at Baalbec shows that there was a second Lysanias, hitherto unknown, who is now generally admitted to be the one referred to by St. Luke.⁴ On

¹ Expository Times, Oct., 1907.

² Acts 5. 37.

³ Luke 3. 1.

⁴ Boeckh's Corp. Ins. Gr., No. 4523: Edersheim's 'Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah,' 1901, vol. i., p. 261.

the whole then, our Four Gospels, wherever we have any means of testing them by secular history, appear to be substantially accurate.

(B.) THE THREE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS. -

We pass on now to examine the Gospels in detail, and will commence with the three Synoptic Gospels ; first considering their *sources*, then their *apparent truthfulness*, and lastly their *probable date*.

(1.) *Their sources.*

Now the three Gospels have, as is well known, a number of identical passages ; and as these are far too many to be ascribed to oral tradition, they must be due to *copying* in some form, either two Evangelists copying the third, or all three some earlier document. The portion they have in common is often called the *Triple Tradition* ; but this is a singularly unfortunate name, as it seems to imply that this part of the narrative is triply attested, whereas it is precisely the opposite. For if the three Evangelists record an event in the same words, it is obviously derived from only one original source ; whereas, if they record it in different words, it may be due to three independent witnesses.

This triple tradition includes many of the parables of Christ, also several of His miracles, such as the stilling of the storm, the feeding of the five thousand, the curing of the Gadarene, and the Transfiguration ; but it stops short at the Passion. If, as is probable, it represents the testimony of a single witness, there is little difficulty in identifying him with St. Peter. As to the closing scenes of Christ's life, there would of

course be numerous witnesses, and this may account for want of verbal agreement here.

But it must be remembered that it is *most unlikely* for the *whole* of this original document to have been verbally incorporated in three separate Gospels, and often in a different order ; it is sure to have contained something else that was only copied by one or two. And therefore many critics are now of opinion that the so-called Triple Tradition was merely our St. Mark's Gospel, practically all of which was copied, either by St. Matthew or St. Luke, if not by both. And this is certainly probable, for the many graphic details in this Gospel, which have led to its being called the *first impressions* of the life of Christ, show that it must date from an extremely early time ; so it was most likely known to the other Evangelists. And it would also agree with the statement of Papias (quoted in the last chapter) that St. Mark got his information from St. Peter.

But this is not all ; for our first and third Gospels also contain a common element, which is not in St. Mark, and this looks like another older document. While St. Luke expressly says that *many* had written before himself ; so we may safely assume that there were several such documents in existence at the time. And this was only natural, for the Christian religion spread with great rapidity, and from the very first what its missionaries preached was not a mere philosophy or system of morals, but the life and work, the death and resurrection of Christ. Indeed, St. Luke himself says that he only wrote his Gospel to assure

Theophilus of the things wherein he had already been instructed, clearly showing that the course of instruction must have included the whole of Christ's life, from His Virgin-Birth to His Ascension.¹ And therefore from the very first Christian teachers must have had some accounts of that life. And that they left these with the Churches they founded is most probable.

And this is strongly confirmed by *St. Paul's Epistles*. As is well known, four of these (Rom., 1 Cor., 2 Cor., and Gal.) are admitted to be genuine by critics of all schools, such as Baur, Strauss, Renan, and the author of 'Supernatural Religion'; and they show that the Gospel which he preached, and which he alludes to all through his Epistles, was based on certain historic facts connected with Christ's life, especially His Resurrection, and that he was in the habit of committing these to his converts.² And that there was some *written* account of them is extremely probable, since Christianity arose in a literary age; and these same Epistles show how fully both preachers and converts were able to appreciate documentary teaching. Indeed that the early Christians should not have had some written account of their Founder's Life is scarcely conceivable. And when we add to this the fact that many of the parables and other sayings of Christ have, as we shall see, strong claims to genuineness, and therefore to a very early date, the conclusion seems irresistible that some biographies of Christ must have been composed very soon after His death.

¹ Luke 1. 4.

² E.g., 1 Cor. 11. 23-25; 15. 1-8,

And this has been rendered still more probable in recent years, by the discovery of quantities of Egyptian papyri, which show that writing was in common use among all classes at the time of Christ. And therefore we may say, in the words of Sir William Ramsay, 'So far as antecedent probability goes, founded on the general character of preceding and contemporary society, the first Christian account of the circumstances connected with the death of Jesus must be presumed to have been written in the year when Jesus died.'¹

And there are even some passages in our Gospels which seem to date still earlier ; such as Luke 1. 68-79. This reads like a portion of the Old Testament, with its allusions to the God of Israel, the house of His servant David, His holy covenant, the oath which He swore unto Abraham our father, and above all the hopes of a Messiah, who should *deliver us from the hands of our enemies*—i.e., the Romans. Of course Christians give a spiritual meaning to the passage, but this was obviously not its original sense. It is all perfectly consistent in the mouth of Zacharias shortly before the time of Christ, but could scarcely have been invented by anyone after the Crucifixion. And exactly the same may be said of other parts of this chapter (e.g., vv. 32-33). No doubt St. Luke incorporated it all from some early document ; but if so it strongly supports his own statement, that he had ample means of knowing the truth, from the very beginning. And this, he says, was the express reason why he determined to write ; so a more (apparently) trustworthy

¹ Transactions of Victoria Institute, vol. xxxix., 1907, p. 203.

historian can scarcely be imagined.¹ Fortunately, however, though dividing the Gospels into their original parts is an interesting study, it is in no way essential to our present argument. -

(2.) *Their apparent truthfulness.*

We now come to the *apparent truthfulness* of the Gospels, and of this there are numerous indications. The writers, for instance, record several events which were not at all creditable to the Apostles, such as their cowardice when Christ was apprehended ; and also many minute incidents which could hardly have been worth inventing. Moreover, when they relate Christ's acts, they do so as a rule without remark, and do not dwell upon their excellence in the way St. Paul does, or stop to censure His foes. And the same calmness is shown even when recording the details of His Passion and the triumph of His Resurrection. They express no indignation at the one, and no exultation at the other, but strictly limit themselves to the actual facts.

This is indeed so striking, that it has sometimes been made the ground of objection. The Evangelists, it is said, describe the most stupendous miracles, even the Resurrection itself, as if they were common everyday affairs ; so they clearly did not realise the extraordinary nature of the events, and the extraordinary amount of evidence required to prove them. But this is only partly true, for they frequently record the astonishment felt by the crowds at Christ's miracles ; and for themselves they expressed the wonder they felt at the Resurrection, not in words, but in deeds ;

¹ Luke 1. 1-4.

devoting their whole lives to preaching it, and risking everything for its sake.

Again, and this is very important, the facts recorded in the Gospels are often of such a kind as to bear unmistakable signs of truthfulness. Is it conceivable, for example, that Christians in later times, who believed Christ to be the King of Glory, should ever have *invented* His prayer in Gethsemane, that the cup might pass from Him ; or His (seeming) cry of despair on the Cross that God had forsaken Him ? Or would they have said that His relatives thought Him mad, unless it had been the case, or that one of His own Apostles actually ventured to rebuke Him ?¹

Moreover, the Evangelists record several of Christ's *hard sayings*, as they are called, which must have presented great difficulties. In particular may be mentioned His statement that some of the bystanders were not to die till apparently the end of the world, and that a Christian's faith could move mountains.² That such statements should have been invented in later years is out of the question ; so we can only conclude that they were actually spoken by Christ, and that the writers, knowing this, did not venture to omit them or soften them down, no matter what difficulties they presented. And the former passage gives us an indication of the *date* of the Gospels ; for they must obviously have been written when some of Christ's hearers were still alive, and therefore within the first century.

Again, nearly all the *parables* of Christ have very

¹ Mark 3. 21 ; 14. 36 ; 15. 34 ; 8. 32.

² Matt. 16. 28 ; 17. 20 ; Mark 9. 1 ; 11. 23 ; Luke 9. 27 ; 17. 6.

strong marks of genuineness, as they are thoroughly natural in character, and suit the customs and scenery in Palestine. Moreover, they are unique in Christian literature. However strange we may think it, the early Christians seem never to have adopted Christ's method of teaching by parables. And yet, if they had invented these parables, instead of merely recording them, they would doubtless have invented others like them. It is hence probable that these discourses are genuine ; and, if so, they must have been written down within a very few years, since the accurate preservation of such long discourses by memory would have been most difficult.

On the other hand, it must be admitted that there are some *discrepancies* between the Gospels ; but these are as a rule so trivial that they do not affect their substantial accuracy. For example,¹ St. Matthew relates that at Christ's Baptism the Voice from Heaven said, '*This* is my beloved Son, in *whom* I am well pleased ;' and the other Evangelists, '*Thou* art my beloved Son, in *thee* I am well pleased.' Now the Voice may have spoken in the third or in the second person, but not in both. There is a clear verbal discrepancy, whatever words were used or in whatever language they were spoken. Again, St. Matthew records the passage about the Queen of the South as being spoken just after, and St. Luke as just before, the similar passage about the men of Nineveh, though both can hardly be correct. While, however, the discrepancies are plain, their unimportance is at least equally so.

¹ Matt. 3. 17 ; 12. 42 ; Mark 1. 11 ; Luke 3. 22 ; 11. 31.

These Gospels, then, on the whole, have every appearance of being candidly and truthfully written.

(3.) *Their probable date.*

Lastly we come to what is perhaps the most important point of all, the *probable date* of the Synoptic Gospels. And there are strong reasons for fixing this before the fall of Jerusalem, in A.D. 70. For instance, several *subjects* are discussed, such as the lawfulness of the Jews paying tribute to Cæsar, which would have had no interest after that event. And that conversations on such subjects should have been invented in later days, or even thought worth recording, is most improbable. Again in St. Matthew we read that the potter's field, where strangers were buried, was called the field of blood *unto this day*.¹ And this could scarcely have been written after the destruction of Jerusalem, when the whole city was little more than a heap of ruins. Of course, on the other hand it could not have been written immediately after the time of Christ, but twenty years would probably be a sufficient interval.

Still more important is the prophetic description of the fall of Jerusalem itself, which seems confused by the Evangelists with that of the Day of Judgment, St. Matthew saying, and both the others implying, that the one would immediately follow the other.² Had the Gospels been written after the former event, it is almost certain that the writers would have distinguished between the two ; indeed, their not doing

¹ Matt. 27. 8 ; see also 28. 15.

² Matt. 24. 3, 29 , Mark 13. 24 ; Luke 21. 27.

so is scarcely intelligible, except on the supposition that when they wrote both events were yet future.

And this is strongly confirmed by the curious hint given to the readers both in Matthew and Mark to *understand*, and act on Christ's advice, and leave the city and flee to the mountains, before the siege became too severe. It is out of the question that such a warning should have been added *after* the siege, when it would have been utterly useless. It was evidently written before (probably not later than A.D. 65), when the storm seemed to be gathering ; and therefore if it is an interpolation, as it certainly seems to be, it proves a still earlier date for the rest of the chapter. Moreover, none of the Evangelists have altered the passage, as later writers might have done, to make it agree with the event ; for as far as we know, the Christians did not go to *the mountains*, but to Pella, a city in the Jordan valley.¹

St. Luke, it will be noticed, omits the hint just alluded to, and as his prophecy of the siege is rather more exact than the others, it is often thought to have been written *after* the event. But this is a needless assumption, for the hint would have been quite useless for Theophilus, to whom the Gospel was addressed ; and the prophecy is anyhow no closer than that in Deut. 28., which everyone admits was written centuries before (Chapter XI.).

On the whole then everything points to our Synoptic Gospels having been composed some years before the destruction of Jerusalem, say A.D. 50-70 ; and hence

¹ Matt. 24. 16 ; Mark 13. 14 ; Luke 21. 21 ; Eusebius iii. 5.

they were most likely written by the Evangelists, to whom they have been universally ascribed.

And, it may be added, in regard to the Evangelists themselves, St. Matthew the Apostle was a publican or tax-collector, and therefore just the sort of person to keep records.¹ St. Mark came of a well-to-do family, as his relative, Barnabas, had some property ; and his mother, Mary, had a large house at Jerusalem, where Christians used to assemble, and where it has been thought the Last Supper was held ; in which case the *young man* who followed from here to Gethsemane would probably be St. Mark himself. Indeed this latter incident seems so pointless, that it is hard to account for its being recorded, unless the writer felt a personal interest in it.² And in any case, as he was the intimate friend of St. Peter, he must have been well acquainted with the facts he relates, most of which occurred when St. Peter was present.

And St. Luke (as we shall see in the next chapter) was a doctor, who got his information from *eyewitnesses*, and if he was the companion of Cleopas, as is perhaps probable (for such a graphic narrative must have come from one who was present, and yet the language is thoroughly that of St. Luke), he would also have had some slight knowledge of Christ himself.³

All three must thus have been well educated, and quite in a position to write Gospels if they wanted to. While, on the other hand, none of them seem to have taken a prominent part in the founding of Christianity,

¹ Matt. 9. 9. ² Acts 4. 37 ; 12. 12 ; Col. 4. 10 ; Mark 14. 51.

³ Col. 4. 14 ; Luke 1. 2 ; 24. 18 ; *Expositor*, Feb., 1904.

so there was no reason for ascribing the Gospels to them, rather than to such great men as St. Peter and St. Paul, unless they actually wrote them.

(C.) THE FOURTH GOSPEL.

We pass on now to the Fourth Gospel, and will first examine the internal arguments as to its authorship, which are strongly in favour of its being the work of St. John ; and then the two counter-arguments, said to be derived by comparing it with the Synoptic Gospels, and the Book of Revelation.

(I.) *Its authorship.*

In the first place, the writer appears to have been a *Jew*. This is shown by his frequently quoting the Old Testament, and twice from the Hebrew instead of the Septuagint, where there is a difference between them.¹ He was also well acquainted with the Jewish feasts, he alone having recorded Christ's attendance at them ;² with Jewish prejudices, such as their ill-feeling against the Samaritans ; and with Jewish customs, those in regard to purification being frequently alluded to.³ The only counter-argument is from the frequent use of the term *the Jews* ; but this does not necessarily show that the writer was not a Jew himself, but merely that his intended readers were not. A Jew writing for Gentile Christians might certainly use the phrase.

Secondly, the writer appears to have lived in the *first century*. This is probable from his intimate acquaint-

¹ John 13. 18 ; 19. 37.

² John 2. 13 ; 6. 4 ; 7. 37 ; 10. 22 ; 13. 1.

³ John 2. 6 ; 11. 55 ; 18. 28 ; 19. 31.

ance with Jerusalem, and as before said that city was only a heap of ruins after A.D. 70. Thus he speaks of Bethesda, the pool near the sheep-gate, having five porches ; of Solomon's porch ; of the pool of Siloam ; of the brook Kedron ; of the place that is called the Pavement, or Gabbatha ; of the place of a skull, or Golgotha ; and of the Temple with its treasury, its oxen, sheep, and doves for sacrifice, and its money-changers for changing foreign money into Jewish, in which alone the Temple tax could be paid. And he also knew that it had been founded forty-six years before the time of Christ's ministry.¹

Moreover, the controversies discussed in the Gospel are such as would have had no interest even early in the second century. Then the important disputes were about the Gnostic theories as to the origin of evil, as well as such questions as the time of celebrating Easter, and Church government. But none of these are even alluded to in the Gospel, and yet a writer of that age was sure to have taken one or other side in these controversies, and, if a forger, would not have scrupled to introduce some favourable evidence into his pretended Gospel. On the other hand, the duty of observing the Sabbath is discussed at length, which would have had no interest in the second century. And the Gospel is also full of the hopes of the Jews, of a temporal Messiah, and the expectations they had formed about Him, which, of course, perished with Jerusalem.²

Thirdly, the writer appears to have been an *eye-witness* of what he describes. He twice asserts this

¹ John 2. 20.

² *E.g.*, John 7. 27, 31, 42 ; 12. 34.

himself, as well as in an Epistle which is generally allowed to be by the same writer, where he positively declares that he had both seen, heard, and touched his Master.¹ So, if not true, the work must be a deliberate forgery ; and this is certainly improbable. Moreover, the whole narrative seems to imply that the writer was an eye-witness. For instance, he frequently identifies himself with the Apostles, recording their feelings and reflections in a way which would be very unlikely for any forger to have thought of. Would a forger, for instance, have thought of inventing questions which the Apostles wanted to ask their Master, though they were afraid to do so ? Or would he have thought it worth repeating so often that they did not understand at the time the real significance of the events they took part in ?² Or would he have said that they all went to Capernaum, merely to add that they stayed there *not many days*, and without giving a hint as to why they went, or what they did ?³ Or again, would he have invented such a strange discourse as that about the Bread of Life, and then say at the end that it had the effect of driving away many of Christ's own disciples ?⁴

The writer is also very minute as to times and places. Take, for instance, the passage 1. 29—2. 1, with its expressions *On the morrow, Again on the morrow, About the tenth hour, On the morrow, And the third day*. It reads like extracts from an old diary, and why should all these insignificant details be recorded ? What did it

¹ John 1. 14 ; 19. 35 ; 1 John 1. 1.

² E.g., John 2. 17, 22 ; 4. 27 ; 12. 6 ; 13. 28 ; 16. 17 ; 21. 12.

³ John 2. 12.

⁴ John 6. 32-66.

matter half a century later whether it was the same day, or the morrow, or the third day? The only reasonable explanation is that the writer was present himself (being of course the unnamed companion of St. Andrew); that this was the turning-point in his life when he first saw his Lord; and that therefore every detail, however unimportant, was stamped on his memory, and he loved to recall it.

And it should be noticed in passing that this passage explains an apparent difficulty in St. Mark, and the other Synoptics, where it is stated that these Apostles were called to follow Christ, after the death of St. John the Baptist; but with an abruptness, and sudden obedience on their part, which it is hard to believe.¹ We here learn, however, that they had already been with Christ some months before, in company with the Baptist, so they were doubtless prepared for the call when it came.

And the passage, like many others, also bears internal marks of truthfulness. In particular may be mentioned the avowal of Nathanael, *Thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel*, implying that the latter title was at least as honourable as the former. No Christian in later times, when Christ was obviously not the King of Israel (except in a purely spiritual sense), and when the title *Son of God* had come to mean so much more than it ever did to the Jews, would have invented such a phrase as this. Nor would he have put into the mouth of Philip the words, 'Jesus of Nazareth, *the Son of Joseph.*' It was of course quite

¹ Mark 1. 14-20.

natural for Philip to have said so at the time (as during His life Christ could not have been otherwise known than as the Son of Joseph), but it speaks much for the writer's candour to have recorded it, more especially as the latter words were quite needless, and might easily have been omitted. And little marks of genuineness like these are of considerable value in the Fourth Gospel, because it is generally admitted to be the work of a single author ; whereas in the Synoptics they can always be explained as fragments of some older document.

Lastly, if we admit that the writer was an eye-witness, it can hardly be disputed that he was the Apostle *St. John*. Indeed, were he anyone else, it is strange that an apostle of such importance should not be once mentioned throughout the Gospel. It is also significant that the other John, who is described in the Synoptics as John the *Baptist*, to distinguish him from the Apostle, is called in this Gospel merely *John*. No confusion could arise if, and only if, the writer himself were the Apostle John. While still more important is the fact that at the close of the last chapter, which seems to be a sort of appendix to the Gospel (though written in almost exactly the same style) we have the solemn declaration of St. John's disciples, who knew him personally, that he was its author, that he had witnessed the things he wrote about, and that what he said was true ; and testimony more ancient or more conclusive can scarcely be imagined.¹

With regard to the *date* of the book, we can say little

¹ He is called the disciple *whom Jesus loved*, but this evidently means St. John.

for certain, but the extreme care which is taken in these closing verses to explain exactly what Christ did, and did not say as to St. John's dying before His coming again, seems to imply that the matter was still undecided, in other words that St. John was still alive, though very old, when they were written. And if so the Gospel must have been *published* towards the close of the first century.

(2.) *Its connection with the other Gospels.*

But, as before said, there are two arguments against the authenticity of this Gospel. The first is that the Christ of the Fourth Gospel is almost a *different person* from the Christ of the other Gospels. His miracles with one exception are all different, and so are His discourses both in substance and in style. His *character* is also different, since, instead of inculcating moral virtues, as in the Sermon on the Mount, He keeps asserting His own Divine nature. While, lastly, where the Gospels cover the same ground there are *discrepancies* between them. From all this it is urged the Fourth Gospel is evidently unhistorical, and written long after the time of Christ, when the Church held high views concerning His Divinity. This objection is really threefold, and each part of it admits of a complete and satisfactory answer.

To begin with, the fact that the Fourth Gospel narrates *different* events and discourses in the life of Christ from what we find in the other three, and this to an extent which can scarcely be accidental, must of course be admitted. But what then? Why should not one biography of Christ purposely narrate certain

events in His life, which the writer thought important, but which had been omitted in previous accounts? This is what occurs frequently at the present day, and why should it not have occurred then? The Fourth Gospel may have been written on purpose to *supplement* some other accounts.

Nor is this mere conjecture, for there is strong evidence from the Gospel itself that it was actually written with some such purpose. Thus the writer refers to many events without describing them, and in such a way as to show that he supposed his readers knew about them. He assumes, for instance, that they know about St. John the Baptist being imprisoned about Joseph being the reputed father of Christ, about the appointment of the Twelve, and about Mary having anointed the Lord.¹ And when we add to this the fact that many important events in the life of Christ are omitted altogether, such as His Birth, His Baptism, His instituting the Eucharist, and His Ascension, it makes it almost certain that the Gospel was written for well-instructed Christians, who possessed some other biographies of Christ. And everything points to these being our present Synoptic Gospels.

And then as to the style of language ascribed to Christ in the Fourth Gospel being different from that in the Synoptics. This is no doubt partly true, but we have in these other Gospels at least two specimens of similar style; one of which occurs in the so-called Triple Tradition.² And this shows conclusively that

¹ John 3. 24; 6. 42, 70; 11. 2.

² Matt. 11. 25-27; 24. 36; Mark 13. 32; Luke 10. 21, 22.

Christ did occasionally speak in this manner ; and there is no reason why St. John should not have purposely preserved such discourses because the other Evangelists had neglected to do so.

Moreover, Christ's discourses in St. John are, as a rule, addressed to the upper and learned classes, like Nicodemus, *in Jerusalem*, while those in the Synoptics are addressed to the multitudes *in Galilee* ; which will also account for some difference between them. Indeed, judging by the Synoptics alone, some critics have thought that Christ's ministry never reached Jerusalem, till just before His death. But this would be most unlikely, and St. John's account that Christ, like other pious Jews, regularly went up to the feasts there is far more probable, especially as a religious Teacher would scarcely have avoided the chief city. And it is even implied by the Synoptics, both in the word *often* (' How *often* would I have gathered thy children,'¹ etc.), which must mean that Christ had frequently visited the city, and preached there ; and also in the reference to an earlier visit of Christ to Martha and Mary, which shows that He had been to Bethany (close to Jerusalem) some time before.²

The next part of the objection is that the *Character* assigned to Christ in the Fourth Gospel is different from that in the other three. And this also is partly true, for the Fourth Gospel asserts the Divinity of Christ more directly than the others, which only imply it (see Chapter XX.). And very probably the writer did so intentionally, thinking that this aspect of

¹ Matt. 23. 37 ; Luke 13. 34.

² Luke 10. 38.

Christ's character had not been sufficiently emphasised in the previous accounts. Indeed, he implies it himself, for he says that he omitted much that he might have inserted, and merely recorded what he did in order to convince his readers that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God.¹

But in any case no argument for a late date can be drawn from this, for the admittedly genuine Epistles of St. Paul, which are probably as early as the Synoptic Gospels (perhaps earlier) describe exactly the same Christ as is portrayed in the Fourth Gospel, speaking of His Divinity, Pre-existence, and Incarnation. And from the way in which St. Paul alludes to these doctrines he evidently considered them the common belief of all Christians when he wrote, about A.D. 54. And therefore the fact of the Fourth Gospel laying stress on these doctrines is no reason whatever against either its authenticity or its early date. It is indeed just the opposite, for we know from the Book of Revelation (which even hostile critics admit to be genuine) that these doctrines were held by St. John himself (chap. xx.) so their occurring in the Fourth Gospel is a distinct argument in favour of his authorship.

Lastly, as to the *discrepancies*. Many of these can be explained satisfactorily ; possibly all could if we had fuller knowledge. But even if discrepancies exist, the inference against the genuineness of the Fourth Gospel does not follow. For the writer, whoever he was, must certainly have lived after the Synoptics were in circulation, and, as we have seen, probably

¹ John 20. 31.

wrote to supplement them. Now, if he were an obscure Christian, or lived many years after the events of which he pretended he was an eye-witness, he would have been careful not to contradict the received accounts. But if he were the Apostle John, writing from memory after the lapse of many years, he might well narrate things somewhat differently from the others, and, considering his own authority, would not have thought it necessary to make his account harmonise with theirs. Slight discrepancies, then, with the other three Gospels are no argument against the Fourth.

On the other hand, there are several *undesigned coincidences* between them which are a strong argument in favour of the accuracy of both. A couple of examples must suffice here. The first refers to the accusation brought against Christ of destroying and rebuilding the Temple in three days. This is alluded to by both St. Matthew and St. Mark ; but St. John alone records the words on which it was founded, though he does not himself mention the charge, and quotes the words in quite a different connection.¹

The other example refers to feeding the five thousand, which is the only miracle the Four Gospels have in common.² St. Mark says that this occurred in a desert place, where Christ had gone to rest for a while, and to avoid the crowd of persons who were coming and going at Capernaum. But he gives no hint as to why there was this crowd just at that time. St. John says

¹ Matt. 26. 61 ; Mark 14. 58 ; John 2. 19.

² Matt. 14. 13 ; Mark 6. 31 ; Luke 9. 10 ; John 6. 4.

nothing about this temporary seclusion, nor of the great crowd which occasioned it ; but he happens to mention, what fully explains both, that it was shortly before the Passover. Now we know from Josephus and other sources that at the Passover enormous multitudes flocked to Jerusalem from all sides, so that Capernaum, which lay on a main road from the north, would naturally be thronged with persons ' coming and going ' ; and this explains everything, even the little detail, as to the people sitting on the *green* grass, for grass is only green in Palestine in the spring, *i.e.*, at the time of the Passover.

But can anyone think that the writer of the Fourth Gospel purposely made his account to harmonise with the others, and yet left the agreement so incidental that not one reader in a thousand ever discovers it ? The only reasonable explanation is that the event was actually true, and that both writers had independent knowledge of this.

The objection, then, as to the connection of the Fourth Gospel with the Synoptic ones must be put aside. It was plainly meant to supplement them, and it shows not a different Christ, but a different aspect of the same Christ ; while the slight discrepancies, especially when combined with the undesigned coincidences, support its genuineness.

(3.) *Its connection with the Book of Revelation.*

The other objection is perhaps a more important one. The Book of Revelation is now generally admitted to be the work of St. John. Indeed, the evidence in favour of this is very strong, both internal

and external, since it is expressly assigned to St. John by Justin Martyr,¹ and its date is generally fixed at A.D. 68 ; though some critics still prefer A.D. 95, which is the date apparently given by Irenæus. And yet it is said it cannot be by the same writer as the Fourth Gospel for three reasons. The first is, that while the Gospel is *anonymous*, the Revelation is not so. But this is easily explained, since in the Old Testament the Historical Books are nearly always anonymous, and the Prophetical ones never so ; and a Jew might naturally follow this example.

Secondly, there is a considerable *difference in style*. But this is partly accounted for by the difference in subject-matter ; the Gospel being a plain historical narrative, and the Revelation a prophetical vision. And the same writer, when treating of a different subject, or writing for a different purpose, or even at a different time of life, often uses a different style.

The third reason is that the *Greek* of the Revelation is very abrupt, with numerous faults of grammar, and quite unlike that of the Gospel, which is in good Greek. And therefore it is urged a Galilean fisherman like St. John, though he might have been sufficiently educated (as his father was well off, and kept servants)² to have written the former, could scarcely have written the latter. But considering that *some parts* of the Revelation (Chap. 18 for instance) are in very good Greek, many critics consider that the abruptness of other parts was intentional, with a view of imitating the vigorous style of the Old Testament Prophets. But

¹ Dial., 81.

² Mark 1. 20.

perhaps a better explanation is that the Revelation was written by St. John himself, as he is not likely to have had friends in Patmos ; and when writing the Gospel in his old age, he had the assistance of a Greek disciple.

On the other side, it must be remembered that though the two books are different in language, they are the same in their teaching ; for (as just said) the characteristic doctrine of the Fourth Gospel, that of the Divinity of Christ, is asserted almost as plainly in the Revelation. And even the striking expression that Christ is the *Logos*, or *Word*, occurs in both the books, though it is not found elsewhere in the New Testament, except in one of St. John's Epistles.¹ It was evidently a favourite term with this Apostle, though it is worth noting that he never puts it into the mouth of Christ Himself, as an unscrupulous writer might have done.

On the whole, then, this objection is not an insuperable one, while, as already shown, the Fourth Gospel has very strong internal marks of genuineness. And when we combine these with the equally strong external testimony, it forces us to conclude that St. John was the author. This Gospel, then, like the Synoptic ones, must be considered *authentic* ; indeed, the evidence in favour of them all is overwhelming.

¹ John 1. 1 ; 1 John 1. 1 ; Rev. 19. 13.

CHAPTER XVI.

THAT THE GOSPELS ARE AUTHENTIC FROM THE EVIDENCE OF THE ACTS.

Importance of the Acts, as it is by the writer of the Third Gospel.

(A.) ITS ACCURACY.

Three examples of this :

- (1.) The titles of various rulers.
- (2.) The riot at Ephesus.
- (3.) The agreement with St. Paul's Epistles.

(B.) ITS UNITY.

The *We* sections are not by a different author.

(C.) ITS AUTHORSHIP.

The writer was a companion of St. Paul, and a medical man ; and hence probably St. Luke.

(D.) ITS DATE.

There are strong reasons for fixing this at the close of St. Paul's imprisonment at Rome, A.D. 60 ; and this shows an earlier date for all the Synoptic Gospels.

WE have now to consider an argument of great importance derived from the Acts of the Apostles. This book is universally admitted to be by the same writer as the Third Gospel, as is indeed obvious from the manner in which both are addressed to Theophilus, from the *former treatise* being mentioned in the opening verse of the Acts, and from the perfect agreement in style and language. Hence arguments for or against

the antiquity of the Acts affect the Third Gospel also, and therefore, to some extent, all the Synoptic Gospels. And though the external testimony to the book is not so strong as that to the Gospels, it has very strong internal marks of genuineness.

(A.) ITS ACCURACY.

And first as to its extreme accuracy. This book, unlike the Gospels, deals with a large number of public men and places, many of which are well known to us from secular history, while inscriptions referring to others have been recently discovered. It is thus liable to be detected at every step if inaccurate; and yet, with the doubtful exception of the date of the rebellion of Theudas, and some details as to the death of Herod Agrippa,¹ no error can be discovered. As this is practically undisputed, we need not discuss the evidence in detail, but will give three examples only.

(1.) *The titles of various rulers.*

And we will commence with the *titles* given to different rulers. As is well known, the Roman provinces were of two kinds, imperial and senatorial, the former being governed by *proprators*, or when less important by *procurators*, and the latter by *proconsuls*, though they frequently changed hands. Moreover, individual places had often special names for their rulers; and yet in every case the writer of the Acts (though his allusions are quite incidental) always uses the proper title.

For example,² the ruler at Cyprus is styled *proconsul*.

¹ Acts 5. 36; 12. 21-23; Josephus, *Antiq.*, xx. 5; xix. 8.

² Acts 13. 7; 18. 12; 19. 38; 23. 26; 26. 30; 28. 7.

This used to be thought a mistake, but we now know that it is correct ; for though Cyprus had previously belonged to the Emperor, it had been exchanged with the Senate for another province before the time in question. And an inscription¹ found there at Soli has the words in Greek, *Paulus proconsul*, probably the Sergius Paulus of the Acts. Cyprus, it may be added, subsequently changed hands again.

In the same way Gallio is correctly described as *proconsul* of Achaia. For though this province was imperial up to A.D. 44, and independent after A.D. 66, it was senatorial in between, when the writer referred to it. And an inscription, recently found at Delphi, shows that Gallio was proconsul in A.D. 52, which agrees very well with the chronology of the Acts.² At Ephesus the mention of *proconsul* is equally correct ; and so also is the title of *governor* or *procurator*, applied to both Felix and Festus ; while at Malta we read of the *chief-man* ; the accuracy of which title is also proved by inscriptions, though as far as we know it was peculiar to that island.³

Again, Herod Agrippa, shortly before his death, is styled *king*. Now we learn from other sources that he had this title for the last three years of his government (A.D. 41-44), though there had been no king in Judæa for the previous thirty years, nor for many centuries afterwards. Moreover, his son is also called

¹ Cyprus, by Cesnola (London, 1877), p. 425.

² Quoted from M. E. Bourguet in *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, January, 1908.

³ Beckh's Corp. Ins. Lat. X., No. 7495 ; Corp. Ins. Gr., No. 5754.

King Agrippa, though it is implied that he was not king of Judæa, which was governed by Festus, but of some other provinces. And yet he seems to have held some official position in regard to the Jews, since Festus *laid Paul's case before him*, as if he were entitled to hear it. And all this is quite correct ; for Agrippa, though King of Chalcis, and not Judæa, was yet (being a Jew) entrusted by the Emperor with the management of the Jewish Temple and Treasury, and the choice of the High Priests, and was thus a good deal mixed up in Jewish affairs.¹ And equally correct is the remarkable fact that he used to have his sister *Bernice* acting with him on public occasions.²

These notices of the Herods are all confirmed by Josephus, but the view, advocated by a few critics, that the writer of the Acts got his information from Josephus, and therefore wrote after A.D. 100, is quite untenable. It would only account for a small part of his accuracy, and would make it more than ever difficult to account for the remainder ; not to mention the discrepancies as to Theudas, and the death of Herod, where he disagrees with Josephus in several particulars.

Again, the names *prætors* and *lictors* for the magistrates and sergeants at Philippi are probably correct, since that was a Roman colony, though they would not be correct elsewhere. At Thessalonica, on the other hand, the magistrates are called *politarchs*, translated

¹ Acts 12. 1, 20 ; 25. 13, 14 ; Josephus, *Antiq.*, xviii., 6, xix. 5 ; xx. 1, 8, 9.

² Acts 25. 13, 23 ; Josephus, *Wars*, ii. 16 ; *Life*, xi.

'rulers of the city.'¹ This name does not occur in any classical author in this form, and consequently the writer of the Acts used to be accused of a blunder here. His critics were unaware that an old arch was standing all the time at this very place, the modern Salonica, with an inscription containing this very word, saying it was built when certain men were the polittarchs. The arch was destroyed in 1876, but the stone containing the inscription was preserved, and is now in the British Museum.² And since then other inscriptions have been found, showing that the term was in use all through the first century.

Nor is this accuracy confined to well-known places on the coast ; it extends wherever the narrative extends, even to the interior of Asia Minor. Thus at Iconium,³ though the rulers are not mentioned, the people are correctly called *Greeks*, that being a Greek city ; while at the adjacent towns of Antioch and Lystra (the site of which latter was only identified in 1885), they are with equal correctness called *the multitude*, a term which frequently occurs in the inscriptions there. It is also worth noting that according to the writer, Lystra was a city of Lycaonia, but Iconium was not, and it has been recently proved that this was correct ; and it is interesting, because many classical authors wrongly assign Iconium to Lycaonia ; and on the other hand Lystra, though belonging to that province in the first century, was separated from it early in the

¹ Acts 16. 22, 35 ; 17. 6.

² In the Central Hall, near the Library.

³ Acts 14. 1-11.

second ; so that a late writer, or one ignorant of the locality, could easily have made a mistake in either case.¹

(2.) *The riot at Ephesus.*

As a second example we will take the account of the *riot at Ephesus*. All the allusions here to the worship of Diana, including her image believed to have fallen from heaven (perhaps a meteorite roughly cut into shape), her magnificent shrine, the small silver models of this which were used as charms, her widespread worship, and the fanatical devotion of her worshippers, are all in strict agreement with what we know from other sources.

Moreover, inscriptions discovered there have confirmed the narrative in a remarkable manner. They have shown that the *theatre* was the recognised place of public meeting ; that there were certain officers (who presided at games, etc.) called *asiarchs* ; that another well-known Ephesian officer was called the *town-clerk* ; that Ephesus had the curious designation of *temple-keeper* of Diana (long thought to be a difficulty) ; that *temple-robbing* and *blasphemy* were both crimes which were specially recognised by the Ephesian laws ; and that the term *regular assembly* was a technical one in use at Ephesus.² All this minute accuracy is hard to explain unless the narrative came from one

¹ Paper by Sir W. Ramsay in Transactions of Victoria Institute, vol. xxxix., 1907, pp. 209-210 ; and article Iconium in Hastings' Dict. of the Bible.

² *Comp. Acts.* 19. 29-39 ; with inscriptions found in the Great Theatre. Wood's Discoveries at Ephesus, 1877, pp. 43, 47, 53, 51, 15, 39.

who was present during the riot, and recorded what he actually saw and heard.

(3.) *The agreement with St. Paul's Epistles.*

Our third example shall be of a different kind from the preceding. If we compare the biography of St. Paul given in the Acts with the letters of that Apostle, many of them written to the very Churches and persons described there, we shall find a complete though unobtrusive agreement between them. These *undesigned coincidences* are both numerous and striking, and very unlikely to have been deliberately arranged. Here we must confine ourselves to a single Epistle, and select that to the *Romans*, which is one of those universally admitted to be genuine. Though not actually dated, it was evidently written at the close of St. Paul's second visit to Greece; and therefore, if mentioned in the Acts, would come in at 20. 3; and its incidental notices are all consistent with this time and place.

Thus St. Paul says that he was going up to Jerusalem, with alms from Macedonia and Achaia for the poor in that city. Now in the Acts it is stated that St. Paul had just passed through these provinces, and was on his way to Jerusalem, though there is no mention about the alms here. But it happens to be alluded to some chapters later, without, however, mentioning then where the alms came from.¹

We also learn that St. Paul's missionary travels up till now had extended from Jerusalem as far as *Illyricum*. Now Illyricum is not once mentioned in the

¹ Rom. 15. 25, 26; Acts 19. 21; 24. 17.

Acts ; so there can be no intentional agreement here, but yet there is agreement. For we gather from various places that St. Paul had preached from Jerusalem all through what we now call Asia Minor, and just before the date of this Epistle had gone through Macedonia, which was his limit in this direction. And as this was the adjacent province to Illyricum, it exactly agrees with the Epistle.¹

Among other points of agreement may be mentioned St. Paul's friendship with Priscilla and Aquila, who had now apparently returned to Rome ; that he had himself long wished to visit Rome, and intended doing so after his visit to Jerusalem ;² that his feelings were very despondent as he set out on his return journey to the latter city, having doubts as to what would befall him there ; and that Timothy, Gaius, and Sosipater among others were with him when he wrote.³

In regard to all these passages, it should be noticed that the coincidence is in every case *undesigned*. This is the whole point of the argument, though, unfortunately, just alluding to the statements as we have done here, often gives the idea that they are identical, and might easily be copied one from the other. But if anyone will take the trouble to compare the parallel statements with their contexts, he will see that this is out of the question. In other words, the writer of the Acts, whoever he was, did not get his information on these points from this Epistle, but had independent

¹ Rom. 15. 19 ; Acts 20. 2.

² Rom. 15. 23, 25 ; 16. 3 ; Acts 18. 2 ; 19. 21.

³ Rom. 15. 30 ; 16. 21-23 ; Acts 20. 4, 22.

knowledge of them. And if so, considering that they include St. Paul's plans and feelings, as well as the extent of his travels, etc., it follows that he must have been an intimate friend of his. And, as before said, this is a mere sample of the evidence.

While, however, there are thus numerous slight and undesigned coincidences, several more obvious ones do not occur ; and there are even some apparent discrepancies between the Acts and Galatians. These can indeed be reconciled. But what if they could not ? A late writer must have known Galatians, and must have known that his readers knew it too ; and is he likely to have seemed to contradict it ?

We may now sum up the evidence as to the accuracy of the Acts. The above instances are only specimens of many which might be given. The writer knew about Jerusalem and Athens just as well as about Ephesus. While his account of St. Paul's voyage from Cæsarea to Italy, including as it does the description of a variety of places, the climate, and prevailing winds of the Mediterranean, and the phrases and customs of seamen, is so accurate, that critics of all schools have admitted that he is describing a voyage he had actually experienced. In short, the Book of the Acts is full of correct details throughout, and it is hard to believe that anyone but a contemporary could have written it.

(B.) ITS UNITY.

We have next to consider whether the book was the work of a single man or a compilation. As is well known, certain portions are written in the first person

plural, and are commonly called the '*Wc*' sections.¹ The most obvious explanation of this, and the one generally adopted, is that the writer was a *companion* of St. Paul during these portions of his travels ; and the internal evidence is strongly in favour of a common authorship for these sections and the rest of the book.

In the first place, the *language* is extremely similar, there being numerous coincidences in style, and the use in common of over forty important words and expressions, which do not occur elsewhere in the New Testament except in the Third Gospel. This is in fact so striking that those who maintain a different authorship admit that the compiler who incorporated the earlier *Wc* sections in his own narrative re-wrote them to some extent in his own style. But this would require great literary skill on his part, and it is inconceivable that he should have allowed the *Wc* to remain at all. It is clearly the first thing he would have altered. Some critics, indeed, such as Harnack, would even go further, and say that the agreement in style is so *extremely* close, that they must not only have been written by the same man, but at about the same time.²

There are also slight *historical* connections between the two portions. For example, in the earlier chapters several incidents are recorded, in which Philip, one of the *Seven*, was concerned ; and why should these have been selected ? The writer was not present himself, and many far more important events must have oc-

¹ Acts 16. 9-40 ; 20. 5-21. 18 ; 27. 1-28. 16.

² Luke the Physician, translated by Wilkinson, 1907, p. 53.

curred, of which he gives no account. But a casual verse in the *We* sections explains everything: the writer, we are told, stayed *many days* with Philip, and of course learnt these particulars then. And as it seems to have been his rule only to record what he knew for certain, he might well have left out other and more important events, of which he had not such accurate knowledge.¹ And the earlier reference to Philip which ends with the apparently pointless remark that *he came to Cæsarea*, without saying why or wherefore, is also explained, since this was the place at which the writer afterwards met him.

With all this evidence, then, in favour of the unity of the book, why, it may be asked, do some critics wish to split it up? The reason is of course to get rid of any contemporary evidence as to *Miracles*. The book as a whole records numerous miracles, and yet its marks of genuineness in some places are too strong to be denied. Accordingly, the *We* sections which have perhaps the stronger marks of genuineness, and certainly the fewer miracles, are alone allowed to be authentic. Here, it is said, we have the original non-miraculous diary of one of St. Paul's companions, which some writer of the second century published with many marvellous additions of his own, besides re-writing the whole in his own style.

But this theory cannot possibly be accepted. It is, in the first place, *improbable*, because such a diary is not likely to have remained unknown for so many years, that a late writer could publish an 'improved' edition

¹ Acts 6. 5 ; 8. 5-13, 26-40 ; 21. 10 ; Luke 1. 3.

of it without anyone detecting the fraud. Next, it is from its own point of view *inadequate*, because, as a matter of fact, the *We* sections do contain some miracles ;¹ while many of the others, such as the riot at Ephesus, bear equally strong marks of genuineness. While, lastly, it is opposed to all the *evidence*, because there is not only the universal testimony of antiquity in favour of the unity of the book, but, as we have seen, the book itself bears strong marks of unity throughout.

(C.) ITS AUTHORSHIP.

Now, if we admit the accuracy and unity of the book, there is little difficulty in deciding on its authorship. From the *We* sections we learn that the writer was a *companion* of St. Paul in many of his travels, including his voyage to Rome, where he apparently stayed with him two years. There is also another reason for thinking that the writer was a personal friend of St. Paul, and this is from his account of St. Paul's *speeches*. For we have numerous letters of this Apostle, and thus know his style and language well, and on examining the speeches attributed to him all through the Acts, we find they are thoroughly *Pauline* in character. In particular may be mentioned his speech at Athens, which so closely resembles the style of St. Paul, that even hostile critics have been forced to admit its genuineness, though it does not occur in the *We* sections.

And yet, strange to say, the writer does not appear to have known St. Paul's Epistles, at least there are

¹ Acts 16. 18, 26 ; 28. 6, 8-9.

no obvious quotations from them, and in his biography of St. Paul he never once alludes to his having written any letters at all. This latter circumstance alone points to the great antiquity of the book, and when combined with the former, it clearly shows that the writer's acquaintance with St. Paul's language was derived not from his letters, but from himself ; in other words, that he was his intimate friend.

But it is urged on the other side that some of these speeches also show traces of the writer's own language. But what if they do ? Would it not be only natural for a writer who heard St. Paul's speeches, and afterwards wrote them down from short notes or memory, to have occasionally introduced an expression of his own ; more especially as the recorded speeches can only be *abstracts* of what was actually said ? St. Paul, for instance, at Athens is not likely to have spoken for less than half an hour ; whereas his speech in the Acts would not take three minutes.¹ And if anyone will try and reduce a half-hour's speech to three minutes, he will see that it is almost impossible to give a connected and fair outline of the speech, without introducing some extra words.

We also learn indirectly from the book itself that the writer was a *medical man*. The evidence for this is overwhelming, but as the fact is generally admitted, we need not discuss it at length. Suffice it to say, that 201 places have been counted in the Acts, and 252 in the Third Gospel, where words and expressions occur which are specially, and many of them ex-

¹ Acts 17. 22-31.

clusively, used by Greek medical writers, and which, with few exceptions, do not occur elsewhere in the New Testament.¹ For instance, we read of the many proofs of the resurrection ; the word translated *proofs* being frequently used by medical writers to express the infallible symptoms of a disease, in opposition to its mere signs, which may be doubtful, and they expressly give it this meaning. And we read of the restoration of all things ; the word translated *restoration* being the regular medical term for a complete recovery of body or limb.²

From internal evidence, then, we conclude that the writer was an intimate friend of St. Paul and a medical man ; and from one of St. Paul's Epistles we learn his name, *Luke the beloved physician*.³ In confirmation of this it may be mentioned that both this Epistle and that to Philemon, where St. Paul also names Luke as his companion, appear to have been written from Rome, when, as we know, the writer of the Acts was with him. And he seems to have remained with him to the last, *only Luke is with me*.⁴ And yet this beloved and ever-faithful friend of St. Paul is not once named in the Acts, which would be most unlikely unless he were the author himself ; while many other friends of St. Paul are mentioned, and in such a way as to show that they could not be the writer.⁵

Moreover the authorship of the book (as well as that of the Third Gospel) must have been well known from the very beginning, for Theophilus to whom it was

¹ Hobart's Medical Language of St. Luke (1882) ; some of his examples are rather doubtful.

² Acts 1. 3 ; 3. 21.

³ Col. 4. 14 ; Philemon 24.

⁴ 2 Tim. 4. 11.

⁵ Acts 15. 22 ; 20. 4.

addressed was evidently a prominent convert, and he must have known from whom the book came (even if for some reason this was not stated in the superscription), and is not likely to have kept it secret. And therefore the universal belief of the Church in the second century, as witnessed to by Irenæus and the Muratorian canon, which always ascribed it to St. Luke, and never ascribed it to anyone else, is specially important ; and affords a strong additional argument in favour of his being the author.

(D.) ITS DATE.

And the *date* of the book can also be fixed with tolerable certainty. It is implied in its abrupt ending. The last thing it narrates is St. Paul's living at Rome, two years before his trial (A.D. 58-60).¹ It says nothing about this trial, nor of St. Paul's release, nor of his subsequent travels, nor of his second trial and martyrdom (probably under Nero, A.D. 64) ; though had it been written after these events, it could hardly have failed to record them, more especially as the martyrdom of St. Peter and St. Paul, which, according to early authorities, occurred together at Rome, would have formed such a suitable conclusion for a work chiefly concerned with their labours.

On the other hand, the abrupt ending of the book is at once accounted for if we assume that it was written at that time, about A.D. 60, by St. Luke, who did not relate anything further, because nothing further had

¹ The date previously given, A.D. 61-63, is now generally admitted to be three years too late. Rackham's Commentary on the Acts, 1901, p. lxvii.

then occurred. And it is obvious that these two years would not only have formed a most suitable period for its compilation, but that he is very likely to have sent it to his friend Theophilus just before the trial, perhaps somewhat hurriedly, not knowing whether it might not involve his own death, as well as that of St. Paul.

And this would also account for the great prominence given to the events of the immediately preceding years in chapters 20. to 28., which is quite unintelligible, unless the book was written soon afterwards. They were nothing like as important as the events of the next few years, as to which the writer says nothing. And why should he go through the earlier stages of St. Paul's arrest and trial, so carefully, step by step, from Lysias to Felix, from Felix to Festus, and then to Agrippa, and on to Rome ; and then when he comes to the crisis, and the Apostle is about to appear before Cæsar, suddenly break off, without ever giving a hint as to which way it was decided ? Everyone must feel how tantalising it is ; and how unlikely he is to have stopped here, if he could have gone on. And the fact that the journey to Rome itself, especially the shipwreck, is described with such minute and graphic details, also supports the view that it must have been written down very soon afterwards. And then the great similarity of language throughout the book, to which we have already alluded, is in favour of its all having been written at the same time.

Moreover the writer's attitude towards the Roman Government affords another strong argument in favour of an early date. For the Roman judges and officials

are always represented as treating the Christians with fairness, and even kindness ; and the writer leaves St. Paul appealing to Cæsar, with every hope of a favourable verdict. There is no sign of bitterness or ill-feeling anywhere. And all this would have been most unlikely after the great persecution in A.D. 64 ; when, as we learn from the Book of Revelation (admitting its early date), the Christians regarded Rome with the utmost horror, as *drunk with the blood of the martyrs*.

Compare the somewhat similar case of the Indian Mutiny. Can we imagine an Englishman in India writing soon after the Mutiny a history, say of Cawnpore, up to 1854, and then closing it, without ever letting a hint fall that he was aware of the terrible tragedy which happened in 1857, or showing the slightest ill-feeling towards its perpetrators ? The only reasonable conclusion would be that such a history must have been written *before* the Mutiny. In the same way the Acts must have been written *before* Nero's great persecution.

And the same sort of argument is afforded by the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Had the book been written after this, it is strange that the writer should seem to be entirely unaware of it ; more especially as it had so close a bearing on the events described in the Acts, such as the Jewish law not being binding on Gentile Christians. And it is the more significant, because he records the prophecy of the event in his *Gospel*,¹ but nowhere hints that the prophecy had ever been fulfilled.

¹ Luke 19. 43.

Many critics, it is true, who maintain a subsequent date, say that the writer intended to complete his history in a *Third Volume*. But though this would account for his not actually recording later events, it would not account for his writing as if ignorant of them ; nor would it account for his giving such undue prominence to the events in Chapters 20. to 28., and his tone of friendship towards the Roman authorities, to which we have just alluded. Moreover this Third Volume is a pure conjecture. No trace of it exists, nor is there any reference to it in early writers.

It is also worth mentioning that though St. Luke speaks of the Cæsars, Augustus, Tiberius, and Claudius, *by name*,¹ and though he is so careful in other places always to give the names of the public men he alludes to, he never tells us who was the Cæsar (Nero) that is referred to in the latter part of the Acts, and before whom St. Paul was going to be tried.² How easily anyone writing in Nero's reign might omit to do this scarcely needs pointing out.

On the whole then there is very strong evidence in favour of the Acts of the Apostles having been written by St. Luke about A.D. 60 ; and this of course proves an earlier date for *St. Luke's Gospel*. And this again proves a still earlier date for *St. Mark's Gospel*, which is now generally admitted to be the source from which St. Luke got his portion of the so-called Triple Tradition. And it is very probable that *St. Matthew's Gospel* was also earlier than St. Luke's. The evidence

¹ Luke 2. 1 ; 3. 1 ; Acts 11. 28 ; 18. 2.

² Acts 26. 32 ; 27. 24 ; 28. 19.

of the Acts then, while confirming our previous conclusion that the Synoptic Gospels were certainly written before A.D. 70, enables us to add with some confidence (at least it seems so to the present writer) that they were also written before A.D. 60.¹ It has of course no direct bearing on the date of St. John's Gospel.

¹ This is a little earlier than most critics would admit, though some would of course place them earlier still; thus Canon Birks, who discusses the subject at great length, dates them all between A.D. 42-51 (*Horæ Evangelicæ*, 1892 edit., pp. 259, 281, 293).

CHAPTER XVII.¹

THAT THEREFORE THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST IS PROBABLY TRUE.

Importance of the Resurrection, the third day.

(A.) THE NARRATIVES.

Table of Christ's appearances.

- (1.) Discrepancies.
- (2.) Omissions.
- (3.) Agreements.
- (4.) Signs of early date.

(B.) THE WITNESSES.

Now the value of all testimony depends on four questions concerning the witnesses, and in this case the denial of each corresponds to the four chief alternative theories.

- (1.) Their veracity. Did they speak the truth as far as they knew it? They had no motive for preaching the Resurrection unless they believed it, while their conduct and sufferings showed them to be thoroughly convinced of it; so we may dismiss the *Falsehood* Theory.
- (2.) Their knowledge. Had they the means of knowing the truth? Amply sufficient means were within their reach, and they were quite competent to use them; so the *Legend* Theory must also be dismissed.
- (3.) Their investigation. Did they avail themselves of these means? Possibly they did not, from their excited state of mind. This is the *Vision* Theory, which, however, has enormous difficulties.

¹ This chapter can be obtained separately, having been reprinted by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, price 6d.

- (4.) Their reasoning. Did they draw the right conclusion? Might not Christ's appearances be explained by His not having died? This *Swoon* Theory has also enormous difficulties.

(C.) CONCLUSION.

The alleged difficulties of the Christian Theory.

We decided in the previous chapters that the Four Gospels, and also the Acts of the Apostles, were *authentic*; that is to say, they were actually written by the persons to whom they are commonly ascribed. And to these may be added the four great Epistles of St. Paul and the Revelation of St. John, which, as before said, are admitted to be genuine by critics of all schools. We have thus direct testimony as to the alleged teaching and miracles of Christ, that is to say, the testimony of contemporaries, some of whom must have known Him well. St. Matthew and St. John were two of His Apostles; St. Mark and St. Luke had exceptionally good means of knowing the truth, and may perhaps have had some slight knowledge of Christ themselves; as had also St. Paul.¹

We have now to consider the value of their testimony, more especially as to the *Resurrection of Christ*, which fact, either real or supposed, was the foundation of Christianity. This is plain not only from the Gospels, but still more from the Acts, where we have numerous short speeches by the Apostles, given under various circumstances, and to various audiences, including Jewish Councillors, Greek philosophers, and Roman governors. And in nearly all of them the Resurrection of Christ is not only positively asserted, but is empha-

¹ 2 Cor. 5. 16.

sised as a fact established by indisputable evidence and as being the foundation of Christianity.¹ It is even said that it was the special duty of an apostle to bear witness to it; and St. Paul seems to have been aware of this, since, in maintaining his apostleship, he is careful to show that he was thus qualified, and for himself he makes it the *sine quâ non* of his teaching.² It is certain, then, that the first preachers of Christianity preached the Resurrection of Christ.

And it is equally certain that they preached that it occurred on the *third day*, counting from the Crucifixion.³ This also is stated not only in the Gospels, but by St. Paul; who in one place bases his whole argument on the fact that the Body of Christ (unlike that of David) *saw no corruption*, a point also alluded to by St. Peter, and implying a Resurrection in a few days.⁴ While if further evidence is required, the establishment of the first day of the week as *the Lord's Day*—the Christian Sunday—seems to put the matter beyond dispute. We may say then with confidence, that wherever the Resurrection was believed, the fact that it occurred on the *third day*—the day on which they found the Tomb empty, and saw (or thought they saw) His first appearances—was believed also. The two invariably went together. But was this belief

¹ Acts 2. 24; 3. 15; 4. 10; 5. 30; 10. 40; 13. 30; 17. 31; 26. 6, 23.

² Acts 1. 22; 1 Cor. 9. 1; 15. 12-19.

³ Sometimes described as *after three days*, but that the two expressions are meant to be synonymous is clear from Matt. 27. 63-64, where Christ's saying that He would rise again *after three days* is given as the reason for guarding the sepulchre *until the third day*.

⁴ 1 Cor. 15. 4; Acts 13. 35-37; 2. 31.

justified? This is the question we have to consider; and we will first examine the *narratives* of the Resurrection, and then the testimony of its first *witnesses*.

(A.) THE NARRATIVES OF THE RESURRECTION.

Now we have five different accounts of the Resurrection; and these are so thoroughly independent that not one of them can be regarded as the source of any of the others. Little stress, however, can be laid on St. Mark's account, as the genuineness of the last verses is doubtful; but it anyhow represents a very early Christian belief, Aristion being sometimes named as the author. On the other hand, St. Paul's account, which is perhaps the strongest, is universally allowed to have been written within thirty years of the event; the most probable date for which is A.D. 29, and for the Epistle A.D. 54. And it should be noticed that St. Paul expressly reminds the Corinthians that what he here relates concerning the Resurrection is what he preached to them on his first visit (about A.D. 49), and that as they had *received* it from him, so he had himself *received* it from others at a still earlier date.

And we can even fix this date approximately, for two of the appearances he records are to St. Peter and St. James; and he happens to mention elsewhere that these were the two Apostles he met at Jerusalem, three years after his conversion (A.D. 35, or earlier);¹ so he doubtless heard the whole account then, even if he had not heard it before.² And this was certainly within *ten years*—probably within *seven years*—of the

¹ Harnack dates it A.D. 30, a year after the Crucifixion.

² Gal. i. 19.

Crucifixion. More ancient testimony than this can scarcely be desired. And if anything could add to its importance it would be St. Paul's own declaration that in this respect his teaching was the same as that of the original Apostles : *Whether then it be I or they, so we preach and so ye believed.*¹

We need not quote the various accounts here, but the table given on p. 372 exhibits them in a convenient form for reference.

Altogether Christ seems to have been seen on thirteen different occasions, though there may have been others, which are not recorded (they are perhaps hinted at in Acts 1. 3 ; 13. 31 ; John 20. 30). It is doubtful however if (viii.) and (ix.) in the following list are separate appearances, as St. Matthew says that when the Eleven saw him, *they* worshipped Him, but *some* doubted ; which probably means that some others who were present (*i.e.*, some of the five hundred) doubted at first if it was really He, owing to His being some way off, as it was before He *came* to them. Indeed if there were only eleven present, they need scarcely have gone to a *mountain* to meet Christ, a room would have been large enough. But if there were several hundred, collected from the surrounding villages, an open hill (possibly the one where Christ had so often taught before) would be a convenient meeting-place.

On the other hand, the appearance to the five hundred must have been in *Galilee*, as there were not so many disciples in Jerusalem,² and it must have been *by appointment*, as they could hardly have come to-

¹ 1 Cor. 15. 11.

² Acts 1. 15.

TABLE OF CHRIST'S APPEARANCES.

	1 Cor.	Matt.	Mark.	Luke.	John.
Empty tomb visited by women . . .)	..	28. 1-8	16 1-8	24 1-11, 22-23	20 1-2
And by Apostles .	..	..	..	12, 24	3-10
Then Christ was seen by (<i>in or near Jeru- salem</i>)—					
(i) St. Mary Mag- dalene . . . )	..	..	9 11	..	11-18
(ii.) Several women	..	9-10	..	..	..
(iii.) St. Peter. . .	15. 5	..	..	34	..
(iv) Cleopas and another, per- haps St. Luke, at Emmaus .	..	..	12-13	13 35	..
(v.) The Apostles and others (less St Thomas) . .	5	..	14	36-43	19-25
(vi) The Apostles (with St Thomas) . . )	..	..	..	..	26-29
<i>In Galilee—</i>					
(vii.) Seven Apostles at Sea of Tiberias . . )	..	..	..	..	21. 1-23
(viii) The Apostles in Galilee . .)	..	16-20	1. 15-18	..	..
(ix) Over 500 persons	6	..	..	..	..
(x.) St. James . .	7	..	..	..	..
<i>Back at Jerusalem—</i>					
(xi.) The Apostles at Jerusalem . .	..	..	..	44-49	Acts. 1. 4-5
(xii) The Apostles and others at Bethany . .)	7	..	19-20	50-53	1. 6-11, 22
(xiii.) St. Paul . . .	8	..	..	..	9, 3-9

gether by accident ; and they are not likely to have come together at all without the Apostles having collected them ; and all this is an additional reason for identifying it with that recorded by St. Matthew.

It will next be noticed that the appearances form *three groups*. First a group in or near Jerusalem, which was chiefly to the Twelve Apostles, and extended over eight days. Secondly a group in Galilee, the most important being that to the five hundred brethren, which was a sort of *farewell* to His Galilean disciples. This was accompanied, or just preceded, by the appearance to the Apostles ; and probably preceded a few days by that on the Lake, when Christ may have pointed out the mountain where He would appear, and told them when to collect the brethren. And thirdly a group back again at Jerusalem, chiefly to the Twelve, but including others,¹ and ending with the Ascension, or *farewell* to His Jerusalem disciples. And though this *double* farewell is sometimes thought to be a difficulty, yet as Christ's Resurrection was meant to be the proof of His mission, it seems only natural that He should have appeared again to *all* His disciples, and have taken leave of them, both those in Galilee, and those at Jerusalem, the Apostles themselves being of course present on each occasion.

Passing on now to examine the narratives more closely, the first thing that strikes one is that they contain frequent *discrepancies* and *omissions*, as well as of course numerous *agreements* ; while another point, equally important, but not equally obvious, is that they

¹ Acts 1. 22.

also contain several *signs of early date*; so we will consider these in turn.

(I.) *Discrepancies.*

Now that there is a difficulty in reconciling the accounts, everyone must admit, but this seems to be chiefly due to the Evangelists (especially St. Mark and St. Luke) recording separate appearances as if they were continuous. But they do much the same in the rest of their Gospels, often recording separate sayings of Christ as if they were one discourse; and even in closely-connected passages a break has sometimes to be assumed. Take for instance:—*Then the master of the house said to his servant, Go out quickly, etc. And the servant said, Lord what thou didst command is done.*¹ These words seem to follow each other *immediately*; but yet it is obvious that there was an interval between them. And the common expression, *And behold*, which occurs in Matt. 24. 9 (see R.V.), and which certainly seems to imply a close connection, need not really do so, from the way in which it is used elsewhere.²

And therefore it is quite possible for the closing verses of St. Mark and St. Luke to contain words spoken on different occasions. And St. Luke himself implies that they do, for though in his Gospel he describes the appearances as if they all occurred in a few hours (which, however, would place the Ascension in the middle of the night, which is scarcely probable), yet in the Acts he says there were *forty days* between them. He seems to have thought it unnecessary in his Gospel to explain that they were at different times; and if the

¹ Luke 14. 21-22.

² E.g., Matt. 2. 1; 15. 22; 19. 6.

other Evangelists did the same, it would account for most, though not all, of the discrepancies between them.

These discrepancies, however, are often much exaggerated. Take for instance No. (v.) in the previous list. St. Luke and St. John evidently refer to the same occasion, as it was on the evening of the Resurrection day ; and yet one says the Apostles were *terrified*, and thought they saw a spirit ; while the other says they were *glad*. Can both be true ? Certainly they can, if we assume (as is most natural) that the Apostles were *at first* terrified, and thought they saw a spirit ; but were afterwards glad, when on Christ's showing them His hands and side, they were at last convinced that it was really Himself. And He may then have upbraided them for their unbelief as recorded by St. Mark.

And it is surprising to find how slight remarks in the narratives themselves sometimes help to reconcile them. Thus St. John writes as if Mary Magdalene *alone* came to the Tomb, and rushed off without looking in ; but her subsequent words, *we know not where they have laid Him*, show that there were others with her, and that they had looked in and found the Body gone, which agrees with the other Gospels. Later on, of course, she was alone, but then she uses the words. *I know not*.¹ And St. Luke's calling the heavenly visitors *men* in one verse and *angels* in another, explains how both terms might be used by the other Evangelists.²

A more important difficulty is caused by Christ's

¹ John 20. 1, 2, 13.

² Luke 24. 4, 23.

command to the women, that they and the Apostles were to proceed to Galilee to meet Him, when, as He knew, He was going to appear to them in Jerusalem the same day. The most probable explanation is that the interview in Galilee was the one *intended* all along, in fact we are definitely told so.¹ But when the women, in consequence of the Angel's message, and after they had recovered from their fright (which at first made them run away and say nothing to anyone)² went and told the Apostles to go there, they were *disbelieved*.³ This naturally reacted on the women, who also began to doubt, and returned to the sepulchre to make further inquiries, none of them having the slightest intention of proceeding to Galilee.

Under these circumstances, something more was necessary, so Christ appeared first to Mary Magdalene, and then to her with the other Mary, when He told them Himself to warn the Apostles to proceed to Galilee, which they again did, and were again *disbelieved*.⁴ Then He appeared to the two disciples who had gone off to Emmaus, and when they came back, and told the rest, they were also at first *disbelieved*.⁵

After this there was nothing for it, but for Christ to appear to the Apostles Himself, and convince them personally; which He did, when most of them were assembled together the same evening. And He may then have told them to remain in Jerusalem, till they were *all* convinced, as they could scarcely have been expected to collect the five hundred brethren for the

¹ Mark 14. 28.

² Mark 16. 8.

³ Luke 24. 11.

⁴ Mark 16. 11.

⁵ Mark 16. 13.

meeting in Galilee, so long as they kept disputing among themselves, as to whether He had really risen. And it was thus another week before the last sceptic (St. Thomas) was convinced, and they finally started for Galilee. These discrepancies then are not nearly so serious as is commonly supposed.

(2.) *Omissions.*

With regard to the *omissions*, none of our lists are at all complete, and this is often thought to be a difficulty. But as far as the *Gospels* are concerned, the writers nowhere profess to give a complete list of Christ's appearances, any more than of His parables, or His miracles ; they only record *selected instances* ; and not knowing the circumstances under which they wrote, it is often difficult for us to justify their selection. Why, for instance, should only one Gospel (the Third) record such a beautiful parable as that of the Prodigal Son ; or only one (the Fourth) such a striking miracle as that of the raising of Lazarus ?

In the present case, however, their choice seems to be quite intelligible. Thus St. Matthew closes his Gospel, which is concerned chiefly with the Galilean ministry, with the appearance of Christ on the mountain in Galilee ; St. John, whose Gospel is concerned with the Judæan ministry, ended his (before the last chapter was added) with some of the appearances in Jerusalem ; while St. Luke, who was more of an historian, and wrote everything *in order*,¹ though he describes most in detail the appearance to the two disciples at Emmaus (which is only natural if he was

¹ Luke 1. 3.

one of them), is yet careful to carry his narrative right on to the Ascension.

And therefore, though they only record certain appearances, they may have known of the others ; and there can be little doubt that they did. St. John, for instance, though he does not record the Ascension, must certainly have known of it, as he refers to it twice in his own Gospel, in the words, *if ye should behold the Son of Man ascending*, and *I ascend unto my Father* ; the former passage clearly showing that it was to be a visible ascent, and that the Apostles were to see it. And St. Luke, though he does not record an appearance to St. Peter, incidentally alludes to it.¹

On the other hand, *St. Paul's list* certainly looks as if it was meant to be complete ; and this is no doubt a real difficulty. Surely, it is said, if the other appearances had occurred, or were even supposed to have occurred, when St. Paul wrote, he would have heard of them ; and if he had heard of them, he would have mentioned them, as he was evidently trying to make out as strong a case as he could. He might perhaps have omitted the appearances to *women*, as their evidence was not considered of much value at the time, and they were not witnesses of the Resurrection, in the sense he alludes to (*i.e.*, persons who went about preaching it);² but why should he have omitted the rest?

There is however a fairly good explanation. The appearances it will be remembered form *three groups*. Now St. Paul mentions two *individual* appearances, those to St. Peter and St. James ; and this was doubt-

¹ John 6. 62 ; 20. 17 ; Luke 24. 34.

² 1 Cor. 15. 14-15.

less because he had had such vivid accounts of them from the men themselves, who it will be remembered were the two Apostles he first met at Jerusalem ; for we may be sure if they had not told him, he would not have accepted it from anyone else. But he seems to refer to the others *in these groups*, first to the Twelve (at Jerusalem), then to the five hundred brethren (in Galilee), and then to all the Apostles, evidently meaning more than the Twelve (back again at Jerusalem). But by so doing, he does not limit it to only one appearance in each group. In the same way a man might say that on returning to England he saw first his parents, then his brothers, then his cousins ; though he had seen his parents on two days a week apart, his brothers for only a few hours, and his cousins for several successive days.

And the fact that St. Paul, in one of his speeches in the Acts,¹ expressly says that Christ was seen for *many days* at Jerusalem, strongly confirms this view ; that in his Epistle he is mentioning the appearances by groups, rather than every single one ; wishing to emphasise the number of men who had seen Christ, rather than the number of times they had seen Him ; and if so it does away with the difficulty.

(3.) *Agreements.*

Against these discrepancies and omissions moreover, must be set the fact of *substantial agreement* ; for all the more important points—the third day, the empty tomb, the first appearance being in Jerusalem, and the slowness of belief on the part of some of the disciples—

¹ Acts 13. 31.

are vouched for by *every* Evangelist. And further they all agree in *not* giving (what imaginary accounts might well have contained) any description of the Resurrection itself, any appearance of Christ to His enemies, or any information as to the other world ; which last would have been so eagerly welcomed, and could have been so easily invented.

And the *order* in which the appearances are placed is also the same in every account, that to St. Mary Magdalene for instance (wherever it occurs) being always placed first, that to St. Peter next, that to Cleopas next, then that to the Twelve, etc. And this is the more remarkable because the narratives are so obviously independent, and the order is not at all a likely one. Writers of fiction, for instance, would never have made Christ first appear to so little known a person as Mary Magdalene, rather than to His Mother or His Apostles.

Moreover the narratives often help to explain one another in details. Thus, to take a few examples, St. Luke says that *Peter* was the disciple who ran to the Tomb on hearing of the Angel's message, without however giving any reason why he should have been the one to go. But St. Mark, though he does not mention the visit of Peter, records that the message had been specially addressed to him ; and this of course explains his going. St. Luke, it may be added, in the subsequent words, *certain of them that were with us*,¹ implies that at least one other disciple went with him, which agrees with St. John.

¹ Luke 24. 24.

Again St. Matthew narrates that when Christ appeared to Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, He was at once recognised, held by the feet, and worshipped ; and they do not seem to have been at all surprised at meeting Him near the Tomb, in spite of the Angel's message that they should go to Galilee to see Him. Evidently something must have occurred between, making a break in the narrative after v. 8, which (as before said) is quite possible. And from the other Evangelists we learn what this was. For St. John describes an appearance to Mary Magdalene *alone*, when she was rebuked for wishing to touch Him, apparently in the old familiar way, with the mere human title of Rabbi, and without any act of reverence ; and St. Mark says this was the *first* appearance. If then a few minutes later, she, in company with the other Mary, saw Christ again, it would quite account for their absence of surprise at meeting Him, and also for their altered behaviour in prostrating themselves to the ground, and being in consequence permitted to hold Him by the *feet*, and worship Him.

Once more St. Luke says that when Christ appeared to the Apostles, He was mistaken for a *spirit* ; but he gives no reason for this, and it was apparently the only occasion on which it occurred. St. John however, though he does not mention the incident, fully explains it ; for he says that *the doors were shut* for fear of the Jews ; and obviously if Christ suddenly appeared within closed doors, it would account for their thinking that He must be a spirit. On the other hand, St. John speaks of Christ's showing them His hands and side

though without giving any reason for this, but St. Luke's statement that they at first took Him for a spirit ; and that He did this to convince them of His identity, quite accounts for it ; so each of the narratives helps to explain the other.

Again St. Mark (or perhaps Aristion) records Christ as saying, after His command to preach the Gospel to all the world, ' He that believeth *and is baptised* shall be saved,' though without any previous reference to baptism. But St. Matthew says the command was not only to make disciples of all nations, but to *baptise* them as well, and this of course explains the other passage, though curiously enough St. Matthew himself does not refer to it.

And then as to the appearance to the five hundred brethren recorded by St. Paul. None of the Evangelists mention this, but it explains a good deal that they do mention. Thus St. John alludes to the Apostles being in *Galilee*, instead of (as we should have expected) staying in Jerusalem, but he gives no hint as to why they went there. Nor do St. Matthew and St. Mark, who say Christ told them to go there, give any hint as to why He told them ; but this appearance to the five hundred, who had to be collected in Galilee, explains everything. It also accounts for St. Luke's omission of Galilee among the places where the Apostles themselves had to preach the Resurrection ; as there were so many witnesses there already.¹

Now of course too much stress must not be laid on small details like these, but still the fact that such

¹ Acts 1. 8.

short accounts should explain one another in so many ways is a distinct evidence of truthfulness. Legendary accounts of fictitious events would not be likely to do so.

(4.) *Signs of early date.*

Lastly, it is interesting to note that these accounts, especially those in the Synoptics, bear signs of an extremely early, if not a *contemporary* date. Thus St. Peter is still called by his old name of *Simon*, and it is the last occasion when that name is used, without explaining to whom it refers; St. Paul, some years later, though alluding to this same appearance, calling him by what was then his usual name of Cephass or Peter. Whilst St. John, writing many years afterwards, though he is equally accurate as to Simon being the name in use at the time, thinks it necessary to explain who was meant by it ('Jesus saith to Simon *Peter*, Simon son of John, lovest thou Me?').¹

Again, the Apostles are represented as still expecting the kingdom of Israel to be restored; which was an error on their part, that could scarcely have been worth inventing after the Ascension.²

Moreover (and this is very significant) they are spoken of as *the Eleven*, though they could only have had this title for *just these few weeks*.³ And the fact of their having had it seems to have been soon forgotten: for St. Paul even when alluding to this very time prefers to call them by the familiar title of *the Twelve*, which was equally correct, as we are specially

¹ Luke 24. 34; John 21. 15.

² Acts 1. 6; Luke 24. 21.

³ Matt. 28. 16; Mark 16. 14; Luke 24. 9. 33.

told that St. Matthias, who was afterwards elected as the twelfth, had been with them all along.¹ And therefore the use of the former term in the Synoptic Gospels seems to show that the original narratives were either written at the time, or at least by men who took part in those momentous events, and from whose memories the terms then in use (though only for a few weeks), were not easily effaced.

And for all we know the account in the Fourth Gospel (though not published till long afterwards) may also have been written down at the time ; and it certainly bears strong marks of truthfulness. In particular may be mentioned the extremely graphic way in which some of the events are described, such as the visit of the disciples to the empty Tomb, and the appearance by the sea of Tiberias. It is difficult to believe that the writer was not present himself on each occasion, being of course the unnamed disciple *whom Jesus loved*. And the subsequent reference to the manner of St. Peter's death is so very obscure, that it could hardly have been composed as a pretended prophecy after the event.

Again, the *kind* of Resurrection asserted (though no doubt presenting great difficulties) is strongly suggestive of a contemporary date. It was not as said before (Chapter XIII.), a resuscitation of Christ's natural body (as in the case of Lazarus, etc.), but His rising again in a body which combined material and spiritual properties in a remarkable manner. And there was nothing in the Old Testament, or anywhere else, to

¹ Acts 1. 22 ; 1 Cor. 15. 5.

suggest such a Resurrection as this ; it was quite unique. Indeed the *combination* of these properties is so extremely puzzling, that it is hard to see how anything but actual experience (or what they believed to be such) could ever have induced men to record it.

And the fact of the narratives not reproducing St. Paul's list of appearances, or making any attempt to agree with it, is another strong argument in favour of their early date. For had they been written after his Epistle got into circulation, they are not likely to have disregarded it in so important a matter ; unless of course they were written by men, like St. John, whose authority no one would question.

Lastly, the utter absence of any attempt at harmonising the narratives, or avoiding the apparent discrepancies between them, also points to their extreme antiquity. The writers indeed seem to narrate just what they believed to have happened, often mentioning the most trivial circumstances, and without ever attempting to meet difficulties or objections. And though such disjointed accounts might well have been written by the actual witnesses of a stupendous miracle, they are not such as would have been deliberately invented ; nor are they like the embodiment of subsequent legends and myths. In short these narratives appear throughout to be thoroughly trustworthy.

(B.) THE WITNESSES OF THE RESURRECTION.

We pass on now from the narrative of the Resurrection to consider the testimony of its *First Witnesses*, that is to say of those persons who saw, or said they saw, Christ alive after His Crucifixion. This will include

the twelve Apostles, and over 500 other Christians, most of whom St. Paul declares were still alive when he wrote, and evidently able to confirm what he said. And before discussing in detail the value of their testimony, it may be well to glance at certain general rules in regard to all testimony. If, then, a person plainly asserts that an event took place, before we believe that it did take place, we must inquire first as to his *Veracity*: did he speak the truth as far as he knew it? Next as to his *Knowledge*: had he the means of knowing the truth? Next as to his *Investigation*: did he avail himself of those means? And lastly, as to his *Reasoning*: did he draw the right conclusion?

The following example will show the sense in which these terms are used. Suppose a person said that he went to London yesterday. Usually his veracity only need be determined. But now suppose he were blind, then we should have to assure ourselves of his knowledge: had he the means of knowing whether the place was London or not? And granting that he had such means—as, for instance, if trustworthy friends accompanied him—we might still have to inquire as to his investigation: did he avail himself of those means? Possibly he felt sure it was London, and never asked his friends. Or again, suppose the person was a child; then his reasoning must be determined: was he sufficiently educated to draw the right conclusion from what he saw and heard?

And it should be noticed that all possible ways of denying the truth of a statement can be brought under

one or other of these heads. For if a man's statement is not true, it must be either :—

Intentionally false	= want of Veracity.
or { had not the means of knowing the truth }	. . . = want of Knowledge.
Unintentionally false, in which case he either { or had the means, and either { did not use } them } = want of Investiga- tion.	
	{ or used them } = want of Reasoning.

From this it is clear that for anyone to deny a man's statement without disputing either his veracity, knowledge, investigation, or reasoning, is very like denying that one given angle is greater than another without disputing that it is neither equal to it nor less than it. We have now to apply these general rules to the testimony in favour of the Resurrection of Christ. And, as we shall see, the denial of these four points corresponds to the four chief alternative theories.

(I.) *The Veracity of the witnesses.*

Now, that the first witnesses all asserted that Christ rose from the dead and appeared to them is, as we have seen, indisputable ; so obviously the first question is as to their veracity : did they really believe this themselves ? To deny this would be to adopt the *Falsehood Theory*, which is that they were deliberate impostors, who, knowing and believing that their Master did not rise from the dead, yet spent their whole lives in trying to persuade people that He did. And, as we shall see,

their motives, their conduct, and especially their sufferings, are all strongly opposed to such a theory.

And first as to their *motives*. Had they any interest in asserting that Christ rose from the dead unless they really believed it? Merely to say that they could have had no interest, would be to understate the argument, for every motive told the other way. They were a mere handful of men, so few or so faint-hearted that they could not prevent their Master being crucified. What chance was there then of persuading the world that He had risen from the dead, and why should they have embarked on such a hopeless scheme? Nothing but the most firm conviction of their Lord's Resurrection, and therefore of supernatural assistance, would ever have induced men to have ventured on it. If they believed the Resurrection to be true, then, and only then, would they have had any motive whatever for preaching it. While, then, it is plain that the Apostles were not *unbiassed* witnesses, in the sense of witnesses who had no personal interest in the matter, it is equally plain that their evidence is the more valuable on this account, as all their interest was the other way.

Next as to their *conduct*, did this show that they really believed what they preached? And here also the evidence is overwhelming. It is admitted by everyone that when their Master was crucified His followers were filled with gloom and despair. This was only natural. But in a few days this sorrow was changed to intense joy and confidence. They preached the Resurrection in the very place where He was

crucified, and boldly went forth to convert the world in His name. It is clear that before such a marvellous change could take place they must at least have thought they had, what St. Luke asserts they actually did have, *many proofs* of the Resurrection.¹ To them, at all events, the evidence must have seemed conclusive, or Christianity would have perished on Calvary.

Moreover, in preaching such an extraordinary fact, especially in cultured cities like Rome and Corinth, the first witnesses would have been subjected to more than usual cross-examination. Some at least in every city would have used all possible means of finding out the truth, and impostors could hardly have stood, or withstood, such an inquiry. And yet St. Paul's Epistles prove that within thirty years the Resurrection was believed by numbers of men in these distant cities. And what is very important, it was believed by *educated* men, for his method of reasoning, especially in his Epistle to the Romans, shows that he thought his readers quite able to follow a difficult argument.

But even this is not all, for the conduct of the first witnesses in preaching the new religion exposed them to lifelong *suffering* and *persecution*. And this is very important, since voluntary suffering in any form, but especially in its extreme form of martyrdom, seems conclusive as to a man's veracity. Persons do not suffer for what they believe to be false; they must have believed it to be true, though this does not of course prove that it actually was true. And here is

¹ Acts 1. 3.

the answer to the common objection, that since all religions have had their martyrs, this kind of evidence proves nothing. On the contrary, it does prove something, though it does not prove everything. It does not prove that what the man died for was true, but it does prove that he believed it to be true. It is therefore a conclusive test as to his veracity.

What evidence have we, then, that the first witnesses suffered for the truth of what they preached? The evidence is complete and overwhelming, both from the Gospels,¹ the Acts, and St. Paul's Epistles. We need only refer to these latter, as their genuineness is undisputed. St. Paul then, in one place, gives a list of the actual sufferings he had undergone; he alludes to them in numerous other places, and as if they were the common lot of all Christians at the time; and in one passage he expressly includes the other Apostles with himself in the long list of sufferings he describes, which he says had made them a spectacle to the whole world. While he elsewhere alludes to the sufferings of the Christians at a still earlier time, for he assures us that he himself before his conversion persecuted the Church beyond measure, and made havoc of it.²

And, if further evidence is required, the Epistle of Clement of Rome, admittedly genuine, and written about A.D. 96, bears witness to the sufferings and martyrdoms of St. Peter and St. Paul, probably under Nero, A.D. 64; and Tacitus also records the cruel persecution the Christians then endured.³

¹ Matt. 10. 17; Mark 13. 9; Luke 21. 12; John 16. 2.

² *E.g.*, 2 Cor. 11. 24-27; Rom. 8. 35; 1 Cor. 4. 9-13; Gal. 1. 13.

³ Tac. *Annals*, Bk. xv., ch. 44.

There can be thus no doubt as to the constant sufferings of the first witnesses. And it is equally certain that men do not choose a life of suffering except upon conviction. The men, therefore, who did this must have believed their religion to be true, and this always included the Resurrection of Christ as a fundamental part. In short, their conduct is alone sufficient to prove their veracity, for impostors would not have behaved as they behaved. We conclude therefore that when they asserted that Christ rose from the dead, they were asserting what they honestly believed, whether rightly or wrongly, to be true.

And it should be noticed, as this belief was due, not to any *a priori* reasoning, but resulted simply from the witnesses believing that they actually saw Christ alive after His death, we must further conclude that they honestly believed in the appearances of Christ as recorded by themselves in the New Testament ; in other words, these accounts are not *intentionally* false.

So much for the *veracity* of the witnesses. It is not, as a rule, denied by modern opponents of the Resurrection ; but in early times, when men ought to have known best, it was evidently thought to be the only possible alternative. St. Paul declares emphatically that unless Christ had risen, he and the other Apostles were *false witnesses*, in plain words *liars*.¹ That was the only choice. They were either saying what they knew to be true, or what they knew to be false. And the idea of there being some *mistake* about it, due to

¹ 1 Cor. 15, 15.

visions, or swoons, or anything else, never seems to have occurred to anyone.

(2.) *The Knowledge of the witnesses.*

We pass on now to their knowledge : had they the means of knowing whether Christ rose from the dead ? To deny this would be to adopt the *Legend Theory*, which is that our Gospels are not authentic, but merely record subsequent legends, and therefore we cannot say whether the first witnesses had or had not the means of knowing the truth. But this is most unlikely, for Christianity spread with great rapidity, both in Italy, Greece, Asia Minor and elsewhere ; and it is hard to see how any later and legendary account of Christ's life should have been accepted by all these scattered Christian communities, if it differed materially from what they had heard at the first. While if we admit the authenticity of our Gospels, and the veracity of their writers, (both of which have been admitted,) the Legend Theory is out of the question.

They asserted, it will be remembered, that Christ's Body, not His Spirit, appeared to them after the crucifixion ; and from their own accounts it is clear that they had ample means of finding out if this was true. Whether they used these means, and actually did find out, is, of course, another question ; but as to sufficient means being available, and their being quite competent to use them if they liked, there can be no doubt whatever. As has been well said, it was not one person, but many who saw Him ; they saw Him not only separately, but together ; not only for a moment, but for a long time ; not only by night,

but by day ; not only at a distance, but near ; not only once, but several times ; and they not only saw Him, but^a touched Him, walked with Him, conversed with Him, spoke to Him, heard Him answer, ate with Him, and examined His Body to satisfy their doubts. In fact, according to their own accounts, Christ seems to have convinced them in every way in which conviction was possible that He had risen from the dead.

And even if we deny the authenticity of the Gospels the Legend Theory is still untenable. For St. Paul mentions several of the appearances, and as this was within a few years of the events, there was no time for the growth of legends. Nor was there any chance of the accounts being altered (as so often happens) in passing through a number of lips ; for St. Paul, as we have shown, heard of the appearances direct from those who saw them ; and if so, it matters little whether his Epistle was written ten years, or twenty years afterwards. And though he does not give any of the *details* there, he must certainly have done so in his preaching ; and no one can doubt that they were of the same kind, as those recorded in the Gospels. Moreover, being an educated man, he is not likely to have been taken in by imposture, while his language implies that he had carefully investigated the fact, and was evidently well aware of the difficulty it involved ; and of the great responsibility of asserting it if untrue. His testimony is thus very valuable from every point of view, and is absolutely fatal to the Legend Theory.

(3.) *The Investigation of the witnesses.*

By the investigation of a witness is meant, as before

explained, his availing himself of the means he had of ascertaining the truth or otherwise of what he stated. And in the present case everything was in favour of the witnesses doing this. For the Resurrection of Christ was an event of supreme importance to the witnesses themselves, who were prepared to risk their lives for it ; while its truth or otherwise could easily have been ascertained, and they had ample means of doing so. If, then, we deny their investigation, it must be because of their supposed state of mind, their enthusiasm, or their excitement, or something of that kind.

This would be to adopt what is called the *Vision Theory*, which is that the Apostles so expected their Lord to appear to them after His death, and kept so dwelling on the thought of Him, as though unseen, yet perhaps very near to them, that after a time they thought they actually saw Him, and that He had really risen from the dead. The wish was, in fact, father to the thought ; so that when a supposed appearance took place, they were so filled with joy at their Master's presence, that they neglected to ascertain whether the appearance they saw was real, or only due to their own fancy.

With regard to this theory, we must at once admit that it is possible for an honest man to mistake a phantom of his own brain, arising from some diseased state of the mind or body, for a reality in the outer world. Such *subjective* visions are by no means unheard of, though they are not common. And of course the great argument in its favour is that it professes to account for the alleged Resurrection, without on the

one hand admitting its truth, or on the other that the witnesses were deliberate impostors. Here, it is urged, is a way of avoiding both difficulties, by allowing that the witnesses honestly believed all they said, only they were *mistaken* in supposing the appearances to be real, when they were merely due to their own imagination.

Let us now consider how this Vision Theory would suit the accounts of the Resurrection written by the witnesses themselves. As will be seen, we might almost imagine that they had been written on purpose to contradict it. To begin with, the writers were not unacquainted with visions, and occasionally record them as happening to themselves or others. But then they always use suitable expressions, such as falling into a trance.¹ No such language is used in the Gospels to describe the appearances of Christ, which are always recorded as if they were actual matters of fact.

While as to St. Paul, he never confuses the revelations and visions, which he sometimes had,² with the one great appearance of Christ to him, at the commencement of his ministry near Damascus, which qualified him to be an Apostle ;³ and which he evidently considered to be an actual appearance of Christ's *Body*, not His *Spirit*. For when he says that Christ *died*, and was *buried*, and *rose again*, and *appeared* to Cephas, etc., he must mean Christ's *Body* (for a Spirit

¹ Acts 10. 10 ; 9. 10 ; 16. 9, etc.

² E.g., 2 Cor. 12. 1 ; Acts 22. 17.

³ 1 Cor. 9. 1 ; Gal. 1. 17.

cannot be *buried*), and he must mean that it was the *same* Body that died and was buried, that afterwards left the tomb, rose again, and appeared to them, including himself. And even in the one case, where he alludes to this as a *heavenly vision*,¹ he cites it as proving that it is not incredible that God should *raise the dead*; which again shows that what he thought he saw, was a Body that had risen from the grave. Indeed the very word *resurrection* would be meaningless if applied to a spirit; for that only can rise again, which has been laid down in the tomb.

In addition to which, as said before, he contrasts the Body of Christ, which saw no corruption, with that of David, which did see corruption. From all of which it is abundantly clear that St. Paul, like the Four Evangelists, believed in what is called the *physical* resurrection, in the sense that Christ's Body was re-animated and left the grave; though, like them, he also believed that it was no longer a *natural* body, bound by the ordinary laws of nature, but that it shared to some extent the properties of spirits.

Secondly, it is plain from all the accounts that the Apostles did not *expect* the Resurrection, and were much surprised at it, though they afterwards remembered that Christ had foretold it. This is shown, not only by the Christians bringing spices, etc., to embalm the Body,² and persons do not embalm a body unless they expect it to remain in the grave; but also by the account of the appearances themselves. With regard to some of these we have no details, and so no

¹ Acts 26. 8, 19.

² Mark 16. 1; Luke 24. 1.

means of judging ; but wherever we have, with the single exception of that on the mountain in Galilee, (and possibly that to the two Marys), Christ's appearance was wholly unexpected. No one was looking for it, no one was anticipating it. Nor were the appearances of such a kind as would have been suggested by enthusiasm. Many of them were simple, plain, and almost trivial in their character, very different from what enthusiasm would have suggested. And even those that were otherwise, were still not such as the Apostles would be likely to have imagined. Is it likely, for instance, that with all their hopes of a restored Jewish kingdom, they should have imagined a Vision telling them to go and baptize *all the nations* ?

In the next place, subjective visions, due to enthusiasm, would not have started so soon as the *third* day. It would have required a much longer interval for the disciples to have got over the utter confusion caused by the crucifixion, and to realise (perhaps by studying the old prophecies) that this humiliation was, after all, part of God's scheme, and was to be followed by a Resurrection. Nor again would such visions have only lasted for a short time ; and yet with the single exception of that to St. Paul, they were all over in a few weeks, though the enthusiasm of the witnesses lasted through life. Thus the appearances beginning so soon, and ending so soon, are alike strongly opposed to the Vision Theory.

Fourthly, and this is very remarkable, when Christ appeared to His disciples, He was often *not recognised* at first. This was the case with St. Mary Magdalene,

with Cleopas and his companion, and with the disciples at Tiberias. But it is plain that, if they so hoped and expected to see their risen Master, that they eventually fancied they did see Him, they would at once have recognised Him. Their not doing so is quite incompatible with the Vision Theory, and hence, if this theory is true, the record of these appearances at least must be intentionally false, for in each case His not being recognised is an essential part of the incident.

Fifthly, we are repeatedly told that at first some of the disciples *disbelieved* or *doubted* the Resurrection.¹ This is an important point, since it shows that opinions were divided on the subject, and therefore makes it almost certain that they would have used what means they had of finding out the truth. Moreover, some of them remained doubtful even after the others were persuaded, St. Thomas in particular requiring the most convincing proof. His state of mind was certainly not that of an enthusiast, since, instead of being so convinced of the Resurrection as to have imagined it, he could with great difficulty be got to believe it. Indeed, according to these accounts, scarcely one of the first witnesses believed the Resurrection till the belief was almost forced on him. If, then, the Vision Theory is true, this necessitates an additional portion of our accounts being altogether untrue.

Sixthly, subjective visions do not occur to different persons *simultaneously*. A man's private illusions (like his dreams) are his own. A lot of men do not simultaneously dream the same dream, still less do they

¹ Matt. 28. 17 ; Mark 16. 11-14 ; Luke 24. 11, 37 ; John 20. 25.

simultaneously see the same subjective vision—at least a vision like that here referred to, of a person moving about among them, talking to them, etc. This is quite different from Constantine's army thinking that they saw a luminous cross in the sky, or a body of Spanish troops that they saw their patron (St. James) riding at their head, or anything of that kind, several instances of which are known.

But a subjective vision, at all resembling what is described in the Gospels, is extremely rare. It may perhaps happen to one person in ten thousand once in his life. It is difficult to believe that even two persons should be so affected at the same time, while the idea that a dozen or more men should simultaneously see such a subjective vision is out of the question. And the Gospels, it may be added, always imply that Christ was visible *to all present* (though some of them doubted as to His identity) which was not as a rule the case in other alleged visions.

But seventhly, this hypothesis does not account for many of the actual *facts* recorded—facts concerning which, unless the writings are intentionally false, there could be no doubt whatever. Persons could not have honestly believed that they went to the Tomb, and found it empty, if the Body was there all the time; nor that they *touched* their Master, *i.e.*, took hold of His feet, if He existed only in their imagination, for the attempt to touch Him would at once have shown them their mistake. Nor could they have seen Him *eat food*, for a subjective vision, like a dream, would not explain the disappearance of the food. Nor again

could a mere vision take bread and fish, and give it them to eat.¹

Moreover, how are we to account for visionary '*conversations*'? And yet these occurred on every occasion. Christ never merely appeared, and then vanished. He always spoke, and often for a considerable time, giving detailed instructions; and can we imagine anyone believing a mere vision to have done all this? Is it possible, for instance, that the appearance along the road to Emmaus could have been only a vision? In regard to all these particulars, then, and many more, the Vision Theory is hopelessly untenable.

Lastly, there is one other great difficulty which is inherent in the Vision Theory, and does not depend on any of our accounts, and this is the fact of the Jews not being able to produce the *dead Body* of Christ, though His burial-place was well known, and close at hand. For no amount of enthusiasm could go so far as to say that a man's body was restored to life (ate, talked, and walked), if the corpse was lying before them all the time. So the *presence* or *absence* of the Body seems alike fatal to the theory of subjective visions due to enthusiasm. If it could have been found the Jews would have produced it, rather than invent the story about its being stolen; and if it could not be found, fraud, not enthusiasm, must have made away with it.

With regard to this story, it may be noticed that St. Matthew says it was current among the Jews; and Justin Martyr, himself a native of Palestine, alludes

¹ Matt. 28. 9; Luke 24. 43; John 21. 13; Acts 10. 41.

to it as still in circulation in his day.¹ And it is also intrinsically probable, for the Jews are not likely to have made no attempt whatever to dispute the alleged Resurrection ; and yet, if they were unable to produce the Body, there was obviously nothing else for them to say. There can thus be no doubt that some such story existed, though the other Evangelists, who wrote for Gentiles, and not Jews, do not refer to it.

But its weakness is self-evident. For the guard of soldiers could scarcely have seen the disciples come and steal the Body ; and if they said that it was stolen *while they slept*, they plainly could not tell whether this was true, or whether Christ had come forth of His own accord. Moreover that a whole guard (especially of *Roman* soldiers with their strict discipline),² who were put there on purpose to keep the Body, should really have gone to sleep, and allowed it to be stolen, and this in spite of the noise caused by rolling away the great stone, is anyhow *most improbable*. Nor again is it likely if the Body was hurriedly stolen, that the *grave clothes* should have been so carefully left behind ; and yet this is a detail too insignificant to have been worth inventing.³

All, then, that the story proves is this (but this it does prove unquestionably), that though the Body was purposely guarded, yet when it was wanted it was gone, and could not be found. And this is a strong argument not only against the Vision Theory, but against every theory except the Christian one. For

¹ Justin, Dial., 108.

² Matt. 28. 14.

³ Luke 24. 12 ; John 20. 7.

when the Resurrection was first announced, the most obvious and decisive answer would have been for the Jews to have produced the dead Body ; and their not being able to do so strongly supports the Christian account. Indeed, the *empty Tomb*, together with the failure of all attempts to account for it, was doubtless one of the reasons why the Apostles obtained so many converts the first day they preached the Resurrection.¹

And we must remember the obtaining of converts, *i.e.*, the founding of Christianity, is, after all, the fact that has to be explained. And even if the Vision Theory could account for the Apostles themselves believing that they had seen Christ, it would not account for their being able to convince others of this belief, (especially if the Body was still in the tomb,) and to found the Church on such a basis. For a mere vision, like a ghost story, would begin and end in nothing, and if the Resurrection also began in nothing how are we to account for its ending in so much ?

Moreover, a mistaken belief in Christ's Resurrection would only, at most, have brought them back to their former hopes and opinions about Him. It might have convinced them that He was the Messiah of the Jews, but not that He was the Saviour of the world. This required not only the Resurrection, but the *subsequent teaching* of Christ,—at least such is the explanation we have of it, and it is difficult to see how else it can be accounted for.²

Summing up these arguments, then, we conclude that the Vision Theory is most improbable in any case,

¹ Acts 2. 41.

² Matt. 28. 18-20 ; Mark 16. 15 ; Luke 24. 47.

and can only be accepted at all by admitting that nearly the whole of our accounts are not only untrue, but intentionally so. But on such a supposition it is quite needless. Its object was to explain the alleged Resurrection without impugning the *veracity* of the writers, and this it is quite unable to do. In short, if the writers honestly believed the accounts as we have them, or indeed any other accounts at all resembling them, the Vision Theory is out of the question.

It does not even account satisfactorily for the one appearance, that to St. Paul, which it might be thought capable of explaining. Physical blindness does not result from a subjective vision, and to say that in his case the wish was father to the thought, and that his expectation and hope of seeing Christ eventually made him think that he did see Him, is absurd. Here was the case of an avowed enemy and a man of great intellectual power who was converted solely by the appearance of Christ. And as he had access to all existing evidence on both sides, and had everything to lose and nothing to gain from the change, his conversion alone is a strong argument in favour of the Resurrection, more especially as the fact itself is beyond dispute.

Before passing on, we must just glance at a modification of the Vision Theory, that has been suggested in recent years ; which is that the Apostles saw *real* visions, miraculously sent by God, to persuade them to go on preaching the Gospel. But this theory has nearly all the difficulties of the ordinary Vision Theory and many more besides ; for it admits the supernatural,

and yet these divinely sent visions were such as to *mislead* the Apostles, and to make them think that Christ's Body had risen from the grave, and saw no corruption, when in reality it was still decaying in the tomb ! It seems scarcely necessary to discuss such a view. Surely if God worked a miracle at all, or gave a supernatural vision, it would be to convince men of what was true, not of what was false.

(4.) *The Reasoning of the witnesses.*

Lastly, there is the question of reasoning. Allowing that the Apostles really saw Christ alive, after His Crucifixion, did they draw the right conclusion in thinking that He had risen from the dead ? The opposite theory is that Christ did not die, but only fainted on the cross, and being taken down, slowly recovered. And in support of this *Swoon Theory*, it is urged that death after crucifixion did not usually ensue so quickly, since we are told that Pilate *marvelled if He were already dead* ; and that He might easily have been mistaken for dead, as no accurate tests were known in those days. Moreover, as He was then placed in a cool rock cave, a return to consciousness would probably ensue, when, of course, He would come forth and visit His friends. And they, superstitious men, looking upon their Master as in some sense divine, and perhaps half expecting the Resurrection, would at once conclude that He had risen from the dead. And being very faint, He would probably ask for something to eat, which is what He did according to St. Luke, and not venture to appear publicly to the Jews. Neither of these two last points, it is urged, is satis-

factorily explained on the supposition of a real resurrection of a Divine Christ.

Now in regard to this theory, it must be admitted that men have sometimes (when carefully attended to by friends) recovered after crucifixion. And the chief argument in its favour is, of course, the same as that in favour of the Vision Theory. It professes to account for the recorded appearances, without admitting either the truth of the Resurrection, or deliberate falsehood on the part of the witnesses, who, according to this theory, were themselves deceived in thinking that Christ had risen from the dead, when in reality He had never died. They could not therefore have helped in restoring Him to consciousness; He must have recovered by Himself. This is essential to the theory; for if, after Christ was taken down from the Cross, and handed over to His friends, they had found that life was not extinct, and by careful tending and nourishing had gradually restored Him, this would indeed account for the appearances in a certain sense; but only by admitting that the Christians were impostors in saying that He had risen from the dead, well knowing that He had never died, and that all their stories about visits to the tomb were merely intended to deceive. But if we admit this, no such theory is necessary.

How then would this theory suit the facts of the case? While admitting its credibility, it is hard to find words to express its great *improbability*. It has immense difficulties, many of them peculiarly its own. And first as to Christ Himself. He must have been ex-

tremely exhausted after all the ill-treatment He had received ; indeed, the piercing of His side with a spear would probably of itself have caused death. And yet in this exhausted state He is supposed not only to have recovered consciousness, but to have been able to come out of the tomb by Himself, rolling away the large stone, which would have been specially difficult from the *inside*. And then, instead of creeping about weak and ill, and wanting nursing and medical treatment. He must have walked over twelve miles, to Emmaus and back—and this with pierced feet¹—and have appeared the same evening to His disciples so completely recovered that they, instead of looking upon Him as still half-dead, imagined that He had conquered death, and was indeed the Prince of Life. All this implies a rapid recovery on the part of Christ, and an amount of credulity on that of the Apostles, which are alike inconceivable.

And it is equally unlikely that so many persons, both friends and foes, should have mistaken Christ for dead. And yet according to this theory the guard entrusted with the execution, who must have had a good deal of experience in such matters ; the centurion, who was sent for by Pilate on purpose to ascertain this very point ; the Christians, who took down the body, carried it to the sepulchre, and wrapped it in linen cloths ; and the Jews, who asked for a night-guard ; must all

¹ The feet being pierced is often disputed, but St. Luke (who probably knew more about crucifixion than we do), evidently thought they were ; for he records Christ as saying, *See my hands and my feet that it is I myself*, which implies that His hands and feet would identify Him.

have honestly believed that Christ was dead when He was not. Moreover, the sepulchre was carefully guarded by His enemies for the express purpose of securing the Body. How then did they let it escape? If they were not asleep at the time, they must either have done this *willingly*, because they were bribed; or else, *unwillingly*, because they could not help it, being overcome by supernatural power;¹ and either alternative is fatal to the Swoon Theory.

This theory also requires not only that the Apostles should have been deceived in thinking that Christ had risen from the dead, but that Christ Himself should have countenanced the deception, or He would have explained the truth to His disciples. He is thus made to be a deceiver instead of His Apostles, which all will admit to be most improbable. And yet the only other alternative is even more so, which is that Christ was Himself mistaken in thinking that He had really died, when He had not.

Moreover, what became of Him afterwards? If He died again within a few weeks, His disciples could scarcely have thought Him the Prince of Life, who had the keys of Death and of Hades;² and if He continued to live, where did He go to? And He must anyhow have died again at some time, and His real tomb is sure to have been much venerated by His followers; and it is difficult to believe that no tradition of it should have remained, sufficient at all events to prevent the belief in the Ascension.

But perhaps the chief argument against this theory

¹ Matt. 28. 4.

² Acts 3. 15; Rev. 1. 18.

is that it does not account for many of the actual *facts* recorded ; such as Christ passing through closed doors, and vanishing at pleasure, as well as His Ascension. These details present no difficulty on the Vision Theory, nor on that of deliberate falsehood, but they are inconsistent with the present one. And though it accounts to some extent for the empty Tomb, it does not account for the *grave-clothes* being there ; for if Christ had come out of the Tomb by Himself, He could scarcely have left His clothes behind ; not to mention the difficulty of taking them off, caused by the adhesive myrrh, which would have stuck them together and to the Body.¹ So that the discarded grave-clothes are fatal to this, as to every other theory, except the Christian one ; and yet it was a simple matter of fact, as to which there could be no possible *mistake*. Either the clothes were there, or else the persons who said they saw them were telling a falsehood.

Moreover, in any case Christ could not have walked to Emmaus and back, or appeared to the Apostles in His *grave-clothes*, so He must have obtained some others somewhere, and where did they come from ? His enemies are not likely to have supplied them, and if His friends did, it makes it more than ever difficult to believe that they were not aware of the fraud. And yet if they were aware of it, it is strange that the truth never leaked out afterwards.

Our conclusion, then, in regard to this *Swoon Theory* is precisely the same as that in regard to the Vision Theory, though for different reasons. It is that the

¹ John 19. 39.

theory is very improbable in any case, and only tenable at all by supposing a large part of our present narratives to be intentionally false. But then such a theory is quite needless.

(C.) CONCLUSION.

Before concluding this chapter a few remarks may be made on the alleged difficulties of the *Christian* theory. There is only one of any consequence, which is how such a miracle as the Resurrection could occur at all, and probably nine out of ten men who disbelieve it, do so for this reason. It is not that the evidence for it is insufficient, (they have perhaps never examined it,) but that no conceivable evidence would be sufficient to establish such an event. Miracles, they say, are incredible, *they cannot happen*, and that settles the point ; for it is of course easier to believe *any* explanation, visions, swoons, or anything else, than the occurrence of that which cannot happen.

But if we admit that miracles are *not* incredible ; (Chapter VII.) and that though *under ordinary circumstances*, a dead man coming to life again would be so *extremely* improbable as to be practically incredible ; yet as these were not ordinary circumstances, and Christ was not an ordinary man, but, as we shall see, an absolutely unique Man, claiming moreover to be Divine, and having a mass of powerful evidence both from His own Character, from previous Prophecies, and from subsequent History, to support His claims ; then that He should rise from the dead, as a proof that these claims were well-founded, does not seem so very improbable after all.

And granting this, the other difficulties are mostly unimportant. That a divine Christ, who was pleased to re-assume His human body, should be able to come out of the tomb, in spite of the stone and the guard, presents no difficulty ; nor that He should appear and disappear at pleasure, and in such a form, and in such dress, as to be recognised or not as He wished (see Chapter XIII.). And His asking for something to eat was obviously to satisfy His disciples of the reality of His risen Body, and thus disprove the Vision Theory, which they were rather inclined to adopt.

There is, however, still one objection which may be thought worth notice. It is Christ's not appearing *publicly* to the Jews. Why, it is asked, did Christ only appear to believers ? Surely this is very suspicious. If He really did rise from the dead, and wished the world to believe it, why did He not settle the point by going publicly into Jerusalem ? He would thus have completely triumphed over His enemies, and saved His followers many sufferings.

In answer to this objection it may be pointed out in the first place that the wording is somewhat ambiguous and misleading. It is of course admitted that Christ only appeared to those who had been His friends before His death (except St. Paul), and not to His enemies, or even to indifferent persons. But as to the fact of His Resurrection, those to whom He appeared were not believers : it was only His repeated appearances that made them so. And every person to whom Christ appeared, no matter how unwilling he was to admit the Resurrection (*e.g.*, St. Thomas), was eventually com-

pelled to do so, simply because the evidence was, or at all events seemed to him to be, overwhelming. Nor is there any reason for thinking that Christ ever wished to triumph over His enemies ; that may be reserved for the next world, here He only wishes to save them.

Secondly, it is at least open to doubt whether it would have *settled the point* if Christ had gone publicly into Jerusalem. No doubt the Jews who saw Him would have been convinced by it, but the nation as a whole might, or might not, have embraced Christianity. If they did *not*, which is the more probable on the Christian view, since they had already rejected many other miracles, the evidence in favour of the Resurrection would have been weakened enormously. A public entry into Jerusalem which did not convince the nation, but which, for example, they ascribed to a pretender, would have been worse than useless evidentially.

If, on the other hand, the Jewish nation had embraced Christianity, it is still doubtful whether the evidence would have been stronger than it is at present. No doubt the early Christians would have been saved many sufferings ; but for this very reason their evidence would be the *less* valuable, for we should have no satisfactory proof of their veracity. Moreover, it would have greatly weakened the force of *Prophecy*, since, in the absence of ancient manuscripts, the assertion that the old Jewish prophecies had been tampered with, to make them suit their Christian interpretation, would be difficult to disprove. But now these

prophecies have been preserved by hostile librarians, and are thus beyond suspicion. It is hence very doubtful whether Christ's going publicly into Jerusalem would have strengthened the total evidence in favour of Christianity.

But thirdly, even admitting that it would, what then? Can we say that it ought to have taken place, or that its not doing so renders the alleged Resurrection improbable? Certainly not; for the evidence in favour of the Resurrection is already amply sufficient to justify anyone in believing it. And if so, the absence of still stronger evidence is no reason for disregarding what we have. And, however strong the evidence was, some men might always say it ought to be stronger.

Moreover, to get the world to believe in the Resurrection required not only evidence, but *missionaries*, that is, men who were so absolutely convinced of its truth, as to be willing to spend their whole lives in witnessing for it, in all lands and at all costs. And the chief object of the Appearances may have been to produce such men; and it is obvious that (apart from a miraculous conversion like St. Paul's) there could not have been more than a few of them.

For only a *few* could have conversed with Christ, and ate with Him after His Death, so as to be quite certain that He was then alive; only a *few* could have known Him so intimately before, as to be quite certain that it was really He, and only a *few* had loved Him so dearly as to be willing to give up everything for His sake. So there were only a few *suitable* witnesses

available. And Christ's frequently appearing to these few, in the private and intimate manner recorded in the Gospels, was evidently more likely to turn them into ardent missionaries (which it actually did) than any public appearance. This objection, then, cannot be maintained.

In conclusion, it seems scarcely necessary to sum up the arguments in this chapter. Suffice it to say we first examined the *narratives* of the Resurrection, and decided that they had every appearance of being thoroughly truthful. And we have since discussed at some length the veracity, knowledge, investigation, and reasoning of its first *witnesses*, and not one of these points can be fairly doubted. In fact the evidence in favour of each is overwhelming. And yet, as before shown, unless we dispute one of these points, we are bound to admit that the Resurrection was true.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THAT THE OTHER NEW TESTAMENT MIRACLES ARE PROBABLY TRUE.

(A.) THEIR CREDIBILITY.

They present few difficulties, except the casting out of Evil Spirits, considered in detail.

(B.) THEIR APPARENT TRUTHFULNESS.

- (1.) General marks of truthfulness.
- (2.) Special marks of truthfulness.

(C.) THEIR PUBLICITY.

- (1.) They are said to have occurred in public.
- (2.) They were publicly appealed to.
- (3.) They were never disputed at the time.
- (4.) The silence of classical writers.
- (5.) Futile attempts to explain them away.

(D.) CONCLUSION.

Objection, why are there no miracles now ?

HAVING discussed in the last chapter the Resurrection of Christ, we pass on now to the other New Testament miracles, and will consider in turn their *credibility*, their *apparent truthfulness*, and their *publicity* ; and will then conclude by noticing an important objection.

(A.) THEIR CREDIBILITY.

Now with one exception, the casting out of evil spirits, the miracles present scarcely any difficulty,

provided of course miracles at all are credible, which we have already admitted in Chapter VII. Most of them, especially those of healing, were very suitable from a moral point of view, while that they were asserted to be evidential of Christ's mission is beyond dispute. Not only do all the Evangelists declare this, but Christ Himself, though He refused to work a miracle when challenged to do so—He would not work one *to order*, as we might say—yet appealed to His *public* miracles in the most emphatic manner. Thus, when the Baptist sent messengers to inquire whether He was the Messiah, His only answer was, 'Go your way, and tell John the things which ye do hear and see; the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up,'¹ etc.

And He afterwards condemned Chorazin, and other cities, in the strongest terms, because, although He had done so many miracles there, they had not repented; which again shows both the publicity of the miracles, and their intended evidential value.² And the passage is specially important, as its genuineness is confirmed by the fact that not a single miracle is recorded as having been worked at Chorazin. And yet, if the Evangelists (or anyone else) had invented the saying, they would surely have invented some miracles there to justify it. If on the other hand they did not invent it, and the words were actually spoken by Christ, is it conceivable that He should have blamed

¹ Matt. 11. 4; Luke 7. 22; see also Mark 2. 10.

² Matt. 11. 21-24; Luke 10. 13-15.

these cities for not believing on Him in spite of His miracles, if He had done no miracles ?

We pass on now to the *casting out of evil spirits* ; and as the whole subject of the existence and influence of spirits or angels is often thought to present great difficulties, we will briefly examine it. And first, as to the *existence* of angels. There is no difficulty here. For the whole analogy of nature would teach us that as there are numerous beings in the scale of life below man, so there would be some beings above man—that is to say, between him and the Supreme Being. And this is rendered still more probable when we reflect on the small gaps there are in the descending scale, and the enormous gap there would be in the ascending scale if man were the next highest being in the universe to God.

And that these higher beings should be entirely *spiritual*, *i.e.*, without material bodies, and therefore beyond scientific discovery, is not improbable. Indeed, considering that man's superiority to lower beings lies in the very fact of his having a semi-spiritual nature, the idea that higher beings may be entirely spiritual is even probable. And that they should have as great, if not greater, intellectual and moral faculties than man seems certain ; for otherwise they would not be higher beings at all. And this necessitates their having *free will*, with the option of choosing good or evil. And that, like men, some should choose one, and some the other, seems equally probable. Hence the existence of both good and evil angels presents no difficulty.

Secondly, as to their *influence*. Now that good angels should wish to influence men for good, and

might occasionally be employed by God for that purpose, scarcely seems improbable. And on the other hand, that evil angels should wish to act, as evil men act, in tempting others to do wrong, is only what we should expect. And that they should be able to do this is quite credible ; for the whole analogy of nature shows that higher beings are always able to influence lower ones. While that God should allow them to do so is no harder to believe than that He should allow evil men to do the same. There is thus no difficulty on *prima facie* grounds as to what is called demoniacal temptation.

But it may still be objected that we have no actual *evidence* of the influence of angels at the present day. But this is at least open to doubt. For what evidence could we expect to have ? We could not expect to have any physical sensation, or anything capable of scientific investigation, for angels are by hypothesis spiritual beings. If, then, they were to influence man, say, by tempting him to do evil, all we could know would be the sudden presence of some wicked or evil thought in our minds, without, as far as we could judge, any previous cause for it. And who will assert that this is unknown, or that, if known, it does not constitute all the proof we could expect of the action of an evil spirit ?

Next as to demoniacal *possession*. Though our ignorance on the subject is admittedly great, there is nothing incredible here. Indeed, the accounts of mesmerism at the present day, though they cannot always be trusted, seem to show that even one man may so

entirely possess the mind and will of another as to make him do whatever he wishes. And it is certainly not more difficult to believe that this power may in certain cases be exercised by an evil spirit. And even the curious fact, mentioned in the Gospels, that the man seems at times to be able to act and speak for himself, apart from the spirit who possesses him, is quite analogous to instances of *double consciousness*, as they are called, at the present day. And much the same may be said of some of the other symptoms which resemble certain forms of madness; though, as the patients are now kept under restraint in civilised countries, they have not the same notoriety.

But it may be said, why ascribe this madness to an evil spirit? But why not? Madness often follows the frequent yielding to certain temptations, such as drunkenness or impurity; and that it may really be due to the action of an evil spirit, (an *unclean* spirit is the significant term used in the Gospels,) and be the appropriate punishment for yielding to *his* temptation, is certainly not incredible. And if so, considering the grossly immoral state of the world at the Christian era, we cannot be surprised at such cases being far more common then than now. And the writers, it may be added, do not (like some early nations) attribute *all* maladies to evil spirits, for we read of men having fever and palsy, as well as being blind, lame, deaf and dumb, without any hint of its being due to an evil spirit. And this shows that they were quite able to distinguish between the two. Lastly, the *cure* of demoniacal possession presents as a miracle no difficulty whatever.

There is, however, an undoubted difficulty in regard to *animals* being thus afflicted. But as we have only a single example of this, the swine at Gadara, it is little more than a *one-text* difficulty.¹ Still it is a difficulty, and I have never seen a satisfactory explanation of it ; though our ignorance about animals, combined with the fact that they resemble man in so many respects, prevents us from saying that it is absolutely incredible.

Two other difficulties in regard to this miracle may be noticed in passing. The first is on the ground of injustice, as Christ allowed the swine to be destroyed, without apparently making any compensation to their owners. But if He were really the Divine Being He claimed to be, the world and all it contained belonged to Him ; and His allowing the swine to be destroyed by evil spirits was no more unjust than His allowing them to die by disease or in any other manner. And it had the advantage of proving conclusively that it was a genuine miracle, for the swine could not have been confederate in any fraud, or in a case of (so-called) *natural* healing.

The second objection refers to the swine being kept at all, considering the abhorrence in which they were held by the Jews. But we happen to know from Josephus that Gadara was one of the few Grecian cities in the country ; so this is really an evidence of truthfulness.² For if the Evangelist had invented the story it is most unlikely that he should have

¹ Matt. 8. 28-34 ; Mark 5. 1-17 ; Luke 8. 26-40.

² Antiq., xvii. 11.

unknowingly selected a Grecian city for the miracle ; and still more unlikely that he should have done so *knowingly*, and yet without giving a hint that' this explained the presence of the swine, but leaving his readers to discover it for themselves. And it is also an evidence of truthfulness that the recorded *effect* of the miracle, on the multitude, was merely that they asked Christ to go away. Writers of fiction would hardly have arranged it thus.

Lastly, we must remember that all the Christian miracles lose a great deal of their improbability when we remember the *unique position of Christ*. And what would be incredible, if told of another man, who had done nothing to alter the history of the world, may be credible of *Him*. We decide, then, that all the New Testament miracles are *credible* ; we have next to consider whether they are *true*.

(B.) THEIR APPARENT TRUTHFULNESS.

Now the testimony in favour of these miracles is very similar to that in favour of the Resurrection of Christ. They are recorded by the same writers and in the same books, and everything points to these accounts being trustworthy. To put it shortly, the writers had no motive for recording the miracles unless they believed them to be true, and they had ample means of finding out whether they were true or not ; while many of them are such as cannot possibly be explained by want of investigation or an error in reasoning. Moreover, as we shall see, they contain numerous marks of truthfulness. These may be divided into two classes, *general*, or those affecting the

miracles as a whole, and *special*, or those affecting particular miracles, or sayings about them ; and we will consider each in turn.

(I.) *General marks of truthfulness.*

Among these we may notice first the extremely simple and graphic way in which many of the miracles are described, such as the curing of the man who was born blind, with the repeated questioning of the man himself.¹ It is difficult to think that it does not come from an eyewitness. And the same may be said of a large number of the miracles in the New Testament.

Secondly, the *kind* of miracles ascribed to Christ seem (as far as we can judge) to be worthy of Him. They were to benefit persons, not to injure them, and they are a great contrast to the imaginary miracles ascribed to Him in the Apocryphal Gospels. It is difficult without long quotations to give anyone an idea of how extremely puerile these are ; when for instance Christ was a child, we read of His making clay birds fly, of His turning children into kids for refusing to play with Him, and of His cursing a boy who had run against Him, and who thereupon fell down dead.² How different such miracles are from those in our Gospels scarcely needs pointing out.

Thirdly, the miracles are closely interwoven with the moral teaching of Christ, and it is difficult either to separate the two or to believe the whole account to be fictitious. His wonderful works and His wonderful words involve each other, and form together an

¹ John 9. 8-34.

² Gospel of the Infancy, chapters xv., xvii., xix.

harmonious whole, which is too life-like to be imaginary. Indeed, a life of Christ without His miracles would be as unintelligible as a life of Napóleon without his campaigns. Thus not only are the great facts of Christianity (such as the Incarnation and the Resurrection) themselves miracles, but its lesser facts and moral teaching are so mixed up with miracles, that a non-miraculous Christianity would be like a contradiction in terms. And it is interesting to note in this connection that St. Mark's Gospel, which is generally admitted to be the earliest of the Synoptics, contains the largest proportion of miracles (eighteen miracles to four parables). As we should expect, it was Christ's miracles, rather than His teaching, which first attracted attention.

Fourthly, there was a great *variety* in the miracles. They were of various kinds, worked in various places, before various witnesses, and with various details and characteristics ; in public as well as in private, in the cities as well as in the country, in groups as well as singly ; when watched by enemies as well as among friends ; unsolicited as well as when asked for ; affecting men as well as women ; the rich as well as the poor, the educated as well as the ignorant, Gentiles as well as Jews, at a distance as well as near, after due notice as well as suddenly, on nature as well as on man—in fact, according to our accounts, it is difficult to imagine any miracles that could have been more absolutely convincing.

Fifthly, many of the miracles were of a *permanent* character, and such as could be examined, and re-

examined, again and again. When, for instance, a man who had long been lame, or deaf, or blind, was restored to health, the villagers, as well as the man himself, could all certify as to the cure for years to come. And miracles such as these are obviously of much greater value than what we may call *momentary* miracles, (such as St. Peter's finding the coin in the fish's mouth) where the only possible evidence is that of the immediate beholders.

Lastly, and this is very remarkable, the Evangelists nearly always relate that Christ worked His miracles *by His own authority*; whereas the Old Testament prophets, with scarcely an exception, worked theirs by calling upon God. Take for instance the parallel cases of raising a widow's son.¹ Elijah prays earnestly that God would restore the child to life; Christ merely gives the command, *I say unto thee, Arise*. The difference between the two is very striking, and is of itself a strong argument in favour of Christ's miracles; for had the Evangelists invented them, it is scarcely conceivable that they should not have modelled them on those of the Old Testament. But instead of this, they describe them as worked in a new and unprecedented manner, and one which must at the time have seemed most presumptuous. (Compare the way in which the prophets taught, *Thus saith the Lord*, with that of Christ, *Verily I say unto you*.)

The Gospel miracles then, from the graphic way in which they are described; the absence in them of anything puerile or unworthy; their close connection with

¹ 1 Kings 17. 21; Luke 7. 14.

the moral teaching of Christ ; their variety ; their permanence, and above all from the authoritative way in which they are said to have been worked ; have every appearance of being truthfully recorded.

(2.) *Special marks of truthfulness.*

Moreover several individual miracles, and sayings about them, are of such a kind as could scarcely have been invented.¹ Take, for instance, the raising of the daughter of Jairus. Now of course any writer, wishing to magnify the power of Christ, might have invented this or any other miracle. But if so, he is not likely to have put into the mouth of Christ Himself the words, *The child is not dead but sleepeth*. These words seem to imply that Christ did not consider it a miracle, and whatever difficulties they present they certainly bear the marks of genuineness. And the same may be said of the miracle of healing the blind man at Bethsaida, which is recorded as if it was a partial failure at first. Christians in later times would scarcely have invented such a miracle as this to ascribe to their Master.

Nor again are they likely to have said that His power of working miracles was so often *conditional* on the faith of the person to be healed, so much so that in one town He could do scarcely any miracles *because of their unbelief*.² This is not the sort of legend that would have grown up round a deified Hero ; it bears unmistakably the mark of genuineness. But if the writer had good means of knowing that Christ could do no miracles in one place, because of their unbelief, had he not equally

¹ Mark 5. 39 ; 8. 23.

² Mark 6. 5-6 ; Matt. 13. 58 ; 9. 22, 29.

good means of knowing that Christ could, and did, do miracles in other places ?

And what shall we say of Christ's frequent commands to keep His miracles *secret* ?¹ There may have been reasons for this in every case, but Christ's followers (who presumably recorded the miracles to get them known) are not likely to have invented, and put into His mouth the command to keep them secret ; nor is Christ likely to have given it, if there had been no miracles to keep secret.

And then there is the striking passage where Christ warned His hearers that even working miracles in His name, without a good life, would not ensure their salvation.² This occurs in one of His most characteristic discourses, the Sermon on the Mount, and it is hard to doubt its genuineness. But even if we do, it is not likely that Christ's followers would have thought of inventing such a warning, if as a matter of fact no one ever did work miracles in His name.

And much the same may be said of another passage (whether written by St. Mark, or Aristion, matters not) where Christ announced that *all* believers would be able to work miracles.³ If He said so, He must surely have been able to work them Himself ; and if He did not say so, His followers must have been able to work them, or their inventing such a promise would merely have shown that they were not believers. On the whole, then, as said before, the accounts of the New Testament miracles have every appearance of being thoroughly truthful.

¹ *E.g.*, Mark 5. 43 ; 7. 36.

² Matt. 7. 22.

³ Mark 16. 17.

(C.) THEIR PUBLICITY.

But the most important point has still to be noticed, which is the alleged *publicity* of these miracles ; and as this renders the testimony in their favour peculiarly strong, we must examine it at some length.

(1.) *They are said to have occurred in public.*

To begin with, many of the miracles are stated to have been worked openly, and before crowds of people, the names of the places where they occurred, and even of the persons concerned, such as Jairus, (a ruler of the synagogue) Bartimæus, Lazarus (a man well-known to the Jewish authorities), and Malchus, (a servant of the High Priest) being often given; and hence if untrue, they could have been at once refuted. Take for instance the feeding of the five thousand, near the Sea of Tiberias. This miracle is recorded in each of the Four Gospels ; it forms part of the so-called Triple Tradition, and must therefore have been written down very soon after the event, when a large number of the five thousand were still alive. Now is it conceivable that anyone would have ventured to make up such an account, even twenty years afterwards, if nothing of the kind had taken place? And if he had done so, would not his story have been instantly refuted?

And of course the same argument applies in other cases ; both in regard to the Gospel miracles, and also in regard to those in the Acts, several of which concern prominent officials, such as the *pro-consul*, Sergius Paulus, at Cyprus, the *gaoler* at Philippi, and the *chief man*, Publius, at Malta. And it is hard to over-estimate the enormous difficulty of thus asserting *public*

miracles, with the names of persons, and places, if none occurred; and yet the early Christians asserted such miracles from the very first.

They also declared that the miracles were not only much talked about and discussed, but that several of those which occurred at Jerusalem were at once *officially investigated* on the spot by the Jewish rulers, who made the most searching inquiries about them. And this also is not likely to have been asserted, unless it was the case; and not likely to have been the case, if there had been no miracles.¹

(2.) *They were publicly appealed to.*

Moreover, these public miracles were *publicly appealed to* by the early Christians. According to the *Acts*, this was done in the very first public sermon, that at Pentecost, by St. Peter, who reminds his hearers that they had themselves seen the miracles (*even as ye yourselves know*), as well as in one other speech at least.² And this is specially important, because even hostile critics, who deny the authenticity of the *Acts*, yet admit that these speeches date from an extremely early time. And if so, it shows conclusively that some of Christ's immediate followers not only believed themselves that He had worked miracles, but spoke as if their opponents believed it too.

That they are not more frequently alluded to is not surprising, when we remember that, according to the writer, and he was an undoubted *eye-witness* in some cases,³ (as they occur in the *We* sections,) the Apostles

¹ *E.g.*, John 9. 13-34; Acts 4. 5-22.

² Acts 2. 22; 10. 38.

³ Acts 16. 16-18; 28. 2-10.

themselves worked miracles, and therefore there was no occasion for them to appeal to those of Christ as proving the truth of what they preached. Their own miracles were quite sufficient to convince anyone who was open to this kind of proof. But still the important fact remains that in the first recorded Christian sermon the public miracles of Christ are publicly appealed to ; and this was within a few months of their occurrence, and at Jerusalem, where the statement, if untrue, could have been more easily refuted than anywhere else.

Passing on now to *St. Paul's Epistles* ; it is true that they do not contain any reference to Christ's miracles, except of course the Resurrection. But as they were not written to convert heathens, but to instruct those who were already Christians, there is nothing surprising in this ; and they do not mention any of His parables either. On the other hand, they do contain direct reference to *Apostolic* miracles. St. Paul in two of his undisputed Epistles positively asserts that he had worked miracles himself ; and he uses the same three words, *signs*, *wonders*, and *mighty works*, which are used in the Gospels to describe the miracles of Christ.¹

The second passage is extremely important, since he speaks of them as the *signs of an apostle*, and calls upon his opponents at Corinth to admit that he was an apostle *because* he had worked these miracles ; and this implies not only that the miracles were publicly performed, but that his readers as well as himself believed that the power of working miracles belonged to all the Apostles. And it will be noticed that he is

¹ Rom. 15. 18, 19 ; 2 Cor. 12. 12 ; see also Gal. 3. 5.

addressing the very persons among whom he declares he had worked the miracles ; which makes it almost inconceivable that his claim was unfounded, quite apart from the difficulty of believing that such a man as St. Paul would wilfully make a false statement. And this is indirect testimony to Christ's miracles as well, for if St. Paul believed that he had worked miracles himself, he must surely have believed that his Master had done the same. And as he was often at Jerusalem,¹ he had ample means of knowing.

Moreover, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews also alludes to miracles, which were worked by the immediate followers of Christ, and in order to bear witness to the truth of what they taught. And he seems to imply that this evidence had convinced himself, and those to whom he wrote.² From all this it follows that the first preachers of Christianity not only appealed to Christ's miracles, but also to their own, in support of their claims. And, as just said, how they could have done this, if they worked no miracles, is not easy to understand.

We next come to a class of writings where we should expect to find Christ's miracles alluded to, and these are the first Christian *Apologies*. Nor are we disappointed. The three earliest of these, of which we have any knowledge, were written by Quadratus, Aristides, and Justin. *Quadratus* addressed his Apology to the Emperor Hadrian (117-138 A.D.), and in a passage, preserved by Eusebius, he lays stress on what we have called the *permanent* character of Christ's miracles.

¹ Acts 7. 58 ; 22. 3 ; Gal. 1. 18.

² Heb. 2. 4.

His words are : ' The works of our Saviour were always conspicuous, for they were real ; both they that were healed and they that were raised from ' the dead were seen, not only when they were healed or raised, but for a long time afterwards ; not only whilst He dwelt on this earth, but also after His departure, and for a good while after it, insomuch as that some of them have reached to our times.'¹

Aristides of Athens wrote about the same time (125 A.D.). He bases his defence of Christianity on its moral character ; and as it was often attacked for being immoral as well as irrational, there is nothing surprising in this. But though he does not appeal to any public miracles, yet as before said (Chapter XIV.) he asserts the Divinity, Incarnation, Virgin-birth, Resurrection, and Ascension of Christ.

Lastly, *Justin* in his *Apology* to the Emperor Antoninus (138-161 A.D.) not only specifies many of Christ's miracles, but also says generally that Christ ' healed those who were maimed, and deaf, and lame in body from their birth, causing them to leap, to hear, and to see by His word. And having raised the dead, and causing them to live, by His deeds He compelled the men who lived at that time to recognise Him. But though they saw such works, they asserted it was magical art. For they dared to call Him a magician and a deceiver of the people.'² Justin, however, does not base his argument on miracles, but chiefly on prophecy, because, as he tells us again, the former might be ascribed to magical arts. Thus two out of

¹ Eusebius, *Hist.*, iv. 3.

² *Dial.*, 69 ; *Apol.* i. 30.

the three earliest apologists appealed to Christ's miracles in the most public manner possible when addressing the Emperor.

(3.) *They were never disputed at the time.*

But now comes another important point. Though these public miracles were publicly appealed to by the early Christians, and though written accounts of them were in circulation very soon after they are alleged to have occurred, yet, as far as we know, no refuting evidence was produced, certainly none has been preserved. And this is the more remarkable since they are said to have been worked among enemies as well as friends. They were thus open to the hostile criticism of an entire nation ; and we may be sure the bitter opponents of Christ, who had brought about His death, would have exposed them if they could ; and yet, as far as we know, they were never disputed. On the contrary, judging by the only evidence we have, they seem to have been admitted both by Jews and heathens ; though, of course, they both denied their evidential value.

The *Jews* did this by ascribing them to *diabolical agency*. And though this was a very strange expedient, considering that their effect was obviously good and not evil, they had really no alternative. Being Monotheists, if they denied that they were worked by God, they were bound to ascribe them to the Devil, for these were the only supernatural powers they believed in ; though of course both of these had subordinate angels under them. But we may ask, would the Jews have adopted such an expedient had there been any

possibility of denying their occurrence? And yet that they did adopt it can scarcely be disputed. It is positively asserted in each of the Synoptic Gospels;¹ and it is hardly conceivable that Christians should have reported such a horrible insinuation as that their Master was an agent of the Evil One, unless it had been made. From this it follows that the Jews admitted the Christian miracles, but denied their evidential value by adopting the violent, though in their case only possible, alternative of ascribing them to the Devil.

But why, it may be asked, if the Jews admitted Christ's miracles, did they not acknowledge His claims? The answer is very instructive. The Jews as a nation no doubt admitted His miracles, and were in consequence quite willing to acknowledge Him as the Messiah. The multitude, we read, wished to make Him a king by force, escorted Him triumphantly into Jerusalem, and were so attached to His cause that the authorities were afraid to arrest Him openly. But, as we shall see in Chapter XX., He claimed to be far more than the Jewish Messiah: He claimed to be *God*. Now, as just said, the Jews were firmly devoted to Monotheism; anyone, therefore, who claimed to be God was of necessity in their eyes a blasphemer. And the chief priests, knowing this, not only accused Christ of blasphemy, but actually got Him to assert His Divine claims on His trial. This at once detached the multitude from His side; and though, only a few days before, they hailed Him as the Son of David, they

¹ Matt. 12. 24; Mark 3. 22; Luke 11. 15.

now with perfect consistency demanded His death. However much they were convinced of His miracles they were still more convinced of Monotheism. And therefore, if a man who worked miracles asserted that he was God, they could only ascribe them to the Devil.

On the other hand, the *Heathen* were in no such dilemma. They believed in a variety of gods, many of whom were favourable to mankind, and could be invoked by *magic*. And therefore they could consistently ascribe the miracles to some of these lesser deities, or, in popular language, to magic. And we have abundant evidence that they did so. As we have seen, it is expressly asserted by Justin, who in consequence preferred the argument from prophecy; and Irenæus did the same, and for avowedly the same reason.¹

Moreover, *Celsus*, the most important opponent of Christianity in the second century, also adopted this view. His works are now lost, but Origen in answering him frequently and positively asserts it. For instance, 'Celsus, moreover, unable to resist the miracles which Jesus is reported to have performed, has already on several occasions spoken of them slanderously as works of sorcery.' And elsewhere he quotes the explanation of Celsus, which was that Jesus, 'having been brought up as an illegitimate child, and having served for hire in Egypt, and then coming to the knowledge of certain miraculous powers, returned from thence to his own country, and by means of those powers proclaimed himself a God.'² And though Celsus lived some years

¹ Bk. ii. 32.

² Origen cont. Cels., i. 38; ii. 48.

after the time in question, it is most unlikely, if the early opponents of Christianity had denied that the miracles occurred, that its later opponents should have given up this strong line of defence, and have adopted the far weaker one that they did occur but were due to magic.

Moreover, the Jewish *Talmud* also asserts that Christ's miracles were due to the magic which He learnt in Egypt, so there can be no doubt that this was a common explanation of them, and therefore the fact that He worked miracles must have been commonly admitted.¹ And this is also shown by another Jewish legend in the *Sepher Toldeth Yehsu*, that Christ obtained His power of working miracles by hiding Himself in the temple, and finding out the Sacred Name; which again shows that the miracles themselves were not denied;² though the Jews in later times seemed unwilling to ascribe them direct to the Devil.

And that the heathen admitted the miracles may also be inferred from a passage in Justin, who says in his Apology (addressed to the Roman Emperor and the Senate) that they can learn that Christ worked miracles (healing the lame, dumb, and blind, cleansing the lepers, and raising the dead) by consulting the Acts of Pontius Pilate; which certainly implies that some such document (whether authentic or not) then existed at Rome, and that it contained a reference to the miracles.³

¹ Edersheim's 'Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah,' 1901, vol. ii., p. 772, gives a reference to the Tractate Shabbath, p. 104.

² Quoted in 'Essays and Reviews,' 12th edit., 1865, p. 139.

³ Apol. I. 35, 48.

We must next notice a well-known, though perhaps spurious, passage in *Josephus*, which describes Christ as a 'wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works.' It then alludes to His alleged Resurrection, and ends with the curious remark, 'The tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day.'¹ The *wonderful works* here referred to were evidently superhuman, *i.e.*, miraculous, since it was in consequence of these that the writer doubted whether it was lawful to call Him a Man. And though the authenticity of the passage has been much disputed, it matters little for our present purpose. For no Christian would have described his religion as a sect not yet extinct. So if not the words of Josephus, they must be the addition of a Jewish or Roman editor; but this is equally good evidence that the non-Christians living at the time did not deny that the miracles actually occurred.

Now the above passages show beyond doubt that it was possible for men in those days to admit that Christ worked miracles without becoming Christians, saying they were due either to the Devil or to magic. Such attempts at getting out of the difficulty are now universally condemned, and anyone who admits the miracles admits the religion they were meant to attest.

(4.) *The silence of classical writers.*

The only argument on the other side is from the *silence* of classical writers. Had the miracles really occurred, it is said, especially in such a well-known place as Palestine, the writers of the day would have

¹ Antiq., xviii. 3.

been full of them. But, with the single exception of Tacitus, they do not even allude to Christianity, and he dismisses it with contempt as a *pernicious superstition*.¹

Now these words of Tacitus show that he had never studied the subject, for whatever may be said against the religion, it certainly was not pernicious; so that he must have rejected Christianity *without examination*. And if the other classical writers did the same, there is nothing remarkable in their not alluding to it. If, on the other hand, they rejected it *after* examination—if, that is, they considered its alleged miracles, and were not convinced by them—they would probably have noticed it. What then the objection amounts to is this, that the writers in question did not think the Christian miracles worth inquiring about. And this is doubtless true, for alleged miracles were common enough in those days; but we have not a single instance of a writer who did inquire about them, and was not convinced of their truth.

It may, of course, be replied that some of the events ought anyhow to be alluded to, more especially the three hours' *darkness over all the land* at the time of the Crucifixion. And if this extended over the whole of Palestine, it is certainly strange that it should not be noticed in secular history. But it may only refer to the neighbourhood of Jerusalem. Compare the case of the slaughter of the Infants at Bethlehem *and in all the borders thereof*, which evidently does not include Jerusalem, only five miles distant, and must therefore

¹ Tac. Annals, Bk. xv., ch. 44.

have been limited to near the village. In the same way, if the darkness was limited to the neighbourhood of Jerusalem there is nothing surprising in its not being alluded to by any except Christian writers, for whom of course its occurring at this time gave it a special significance.

And though the fact just alluded to, of alleged miracles being then so common, is often appealed to as discrediting those of Christ, it really does nothing of the kind. It merely makes us examine the evidence for them more carefully. For if miracles are not only (as shown in Chapter VII.) the most suitable signs to attest a Revelation, but were *especially* suitable at that time, as they were just the sort of signs which were then required and expected (and in consequence often invented by impostors), is there anything surprising in Christ's giving such signs? Is it not rather what we should expect, in the same way that to convince a foreigner one would naturally use the language he understood best?

Of course it may be said that this craving for miracles would very likely have led to their being ascribed to Christ, even had He never worked them, or pretended to work them; and this is no doubt possible. But as they were not ascribed to St. John the Baptist—the second Elijah—the very man for whom they would have seemed so appropriate; nor later on to the pretended Jewish Messiah, Barcochba, in the second century, it is scarcely probable.

It should also be noticed that in some respects the testimony of Christian writers is *more* valuable than

that of Jewish or heathen ones ; for none of the writers of that century were born Christians. They were all unbelievers before they were believers ; and if such testimony from unbelievers would be valuable, it is still more so from those who showed how thoroughly convinced they were of its truth by becoming believers. In fact, the best Jewish or heathen evidence conceivable is that of well-educated men, like St. Paul and St. Luke, who, on the strength of it, became Christians.

While, lastly, it must be remembered that the argument from silence is proverbially unsound. We have, for instance, over two hundred and forty letters of the younger Pliny, and in only one of these does he mention Christianity. Suppose this one had been lost, what a strong argument could have been formed against the spread of Christianity from the silence of Pliny, and yet this one shows its marvellous progress (see Chapter XXI.).

This objection, then, is quite insufficient to outweigh the positive testimony on the other side, and we are forced back to the conclusion that the actual occurrence of the Christian miracles was *never disputed* at the time, either by Jews or heathens. And considering their alleged publicity, this is a strong additional argument in their favour.

(5.) *Futile attempts to explain them away.*

We must next notice certain Rationalistic explanations which have been given of the miracles. It was hardly to be expected that, with such strong evidence in their favour, the modern opponents of Christianity

would merely assert that the accounts were pure fiction from beginning to end. Attempts have of course been made to explain the miracles in such a way that, while depriving them of any supernatural character, it may yet be admitted that some such events occurred which gave rise to the Christian accounts. For instance, Christ's walking on the sea is explained as His walking on a ridge of sand or rock running out just under the water; the raising of Lazarus as his having been buried alive; and feeding the five thousand as nothing more than the example of Christ and His Apostles, who so freely shared their small supply with those around them that it induced others to do the same, and thus eventually everyone had a little.

We will consider a single example in detail, and select the *raising of Lazarus*. And if we take the explanation of this that was formerly offered by *Renan*, we shall probably have before us the best non-miraculous account that can be given of it.¹ Renan, then, admitted that something which was at the time regarded as a miracle occurred at Bethany; but he explained it thus: Christ's friends, he says, were very anxious that He should perform some striking miracle, or what seemed to be such, for the sake of impressing the multitude. And he then proceeds, 'Perhaps Lazarus, still pale from his sickness, caused himself to be swathed in grave-clothes, as one dead, and shut up in his family tomb,' etc. In other words, Lazarus had him-

¹ Renan's *Life of Jesus*, translated by Willbourn, New York, 1864, pp. 304, 305. He afterwards abandoned this theory, I believe.

self buried alive, and then, when Christ was summoned and the stone rolled away, he of course came forth; and the crowd at once believed that he had risen from the dead.

Now in discussing this theory it seems hard to find words to express its great improbability. Is it likely that the simple household at Bethany should ever have thought of such an elaborate fraud? If they believed Christ capable of working a real miracle, what need was there for a sham one? and if they did not believe it, why did they wish other people to believe it? Again, is it likely that Lazarus should have consented to sham being dead, especially when recovering from a real illness? Once more, is it likely that the fraud could have been carried out successfully at the time; and that the truth should never have leaked out afterwards, especially as the event was much talked about, and seems to have led to Christ's being apprehended,¹ though this would probably have occurred in any case?² And above all, is it likely that Christ Himself would have countenanced such a monstrous imposture?

Such a theory, then, would require the very strongest evidence to support it; but there is no evidence at all, either strong or weak. The most that can be said for it is that, according to some critics, it is the best way of accounting for the story in our Gospel, assuming a real miracle to be out of the question. And the fact that even this extraordinary theory is considered *more* likely than that the whole story should be fiction,

¹ John 11. 53; 12. 9.

² John 5. 18; 7. 32; 8. 59; 10. 39; 11. 8.

shows what overwhelming evidence there is in favour of our Gospel history.

Of course it may still be objected that if the miracle really occurred, it ought to have been alluded to by the other Evangelists. But they nowhere profess to record *all* the miracles, indeed they tell us themselves that there were some instances even of raising the dead which they did not record;¹ so they may have omitted this one too. And they probably knew of it, as it alone explains the sudden burst of enthusiasm with which Christ was received at Jerusalem, and which they all record, but do not account for.²

Lastly, it must be remembered that the Christian explanation has but *one* difficulty, the antecedent or philosophical one, for all the miracles. Once admit this, and twenty miracles are no more difficult to believe than two. On the other hand, the difficulties of the Rationalistic explanations are all *cumulative*. If, for instance, the raising of Lazarus is explained by his having been buried alive, it does not account for Christ walking on the sea. If this is explained by there being a ridge of sand running out under the water, it does not account for feeding the five thousand, and so on indefinitely. In short, the difficulties attending such explanations are not only great for each individual miracle, but are all cumulative; and therefore taken together they are quite insuperable.

(D.) CONCLUSION.

Before concluding this chapter there is an important objection still to be considered. Why, it is said, are

¹ Matt. 10. 8; 11. 4; Luke 7. 22.

² E.g., Mark 11. 9.

there no miracles *now*, when they could be properly tested? If they were really employed by God as helps to the spread of His religion, why should they not have accompanied it all along, as it is said they did the Jewish religion? They are surely wanted for the support of Christianity at the present day; and if God were, after due warning, to work a public and indisputable miracle every half-century, all the other evidences of Christianity might be dispensed with.

The answer to this objection is that the Christian revelation does not claim to be an intermittent one, like the Jewish, but a final and complete revelation, made once for all by Christ and His disciples; and that therefore, as there is to be no fresh revelation, there can be no fresh miracles—that is, *evidential* miracles—to attest it. The question of *other* miracles, such as those alleged to have taken place at various periods of Church History, and which were, as a rule, for the benefit of persons already Christians, need not be considered here. If true, they would of course tend to prove the New Testament ones; and if untrue, they would not disprove them, any more than imitation diamonds would disprove the existence of real diamonds.

Of course, it may be replied that God might still work a miracle now by a man, who stated that it was not to authenticate anything fresh which he said himself, but merely to confirm what the Founder of Christianity had said. And this is no doubt possible, but we have not in the whole Bible a single instance of such a miracle, *i.e.*, a miracle not to authenticate some

new message from God, but one that had been delivered centuries before. On the contrary, according to the Bible, a messenger from God always brings his own credentials, even though, as in the case of a prophecy, they may not be verified till afterwards. And what reason have we for thinking that God would change His method now ?

Moreover, the method is a most natural one. When the Revelation was first given, *i.e.*, when Christianity was first preached, the Church was weak, and had to fight its way in a hostile world, so it had the occasional assistance of miracles. When it became strong, they were no longer necessary, and no longer occurred. They had already done all that was required. Their object was to establish the truth of Christianity, and this is precisely what they did. The evidence they afforded was so powerful that a hostile world found it irresistible. And it is, to say the least, extremely doubtful whether, if God were to work a miracle now, it would convince everybody.

This objection, then, must be put aside, and we therefore conclude, on reviewing the whole chapter, that the New Testament miracles are not only credible, but that there is extremely strong evidence in their favour. In particular, their alleged *publicity*, combined with the utter absence of any attempt at disproving them, form together a very powerful argument. And it is doubtful whether any other religion, except, of course, the Jewish, has ever claimed to have been attested by public evidential miracles. Christianity thus rests upon a unique foundation. Unlike

other religions, it appealed at first not to abstract reasoning, or moral consciousness, or physical force, but to miraculous events, of the truth or falsehood of which others could judge. They did judge, and they were convinced. We decide, then, that the New Testament miracles are probably true.

CHAPTER XIX.

THAT THE JEWISH PROPHECIES CONFIRM THE TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY.

(A.) THE PASSION PROPHECY OF ISAIAH.

- (1.) The historical agreement, very striking.
- (2.) The doctrinal agreement, equally so.
- (3.) The modern Jewish interpretation, quite untenable.

(B.) THE PSALM OF THE CRUCIFIXION.

- (1.) Its close agreement, all through.
- (2.) Some objections, unimportant.

(C.) THE DIVINITY OF THE MESSIAH.

At least three distinct prophecies of this ; and it is also involved in some hints as to the Doctrine of the Trinity.

(D.) CONCLUSION.

Why are not the prophecies plainer ? Cumulative nature of the evidence.

WE propose to consider in this chapter the argument from *Prophecy*. Now it is a remarkable and undisputed fact that for many centuries before the Christian era it was foretold that one of the Jewish nation should be a blessing to *all mankind*. This promise is recorded as having been made both to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob ;¹ and as a matter of fact, Christianity was founded by a Jew, and has undoubtedly been a blessing to the human race. This is at least a remarkable coincidence ; and it is to be noticed that, as we proceed

¹ Gen. 22. 18 ; 26. 4 ; 28. 14.

in the Old Testament, the statements about this future Messiah gradually become clearer and fuller, till at last, in the Prophets, we find whole chapters referring to Him, which Christians assert were actually fulfilled in Christ.

This argument is plainly of the utmost importance, and must therefore be examined at some length. Fortunately it is much simplified for two reasons. The first is that the question of dates is altogether excluded. As a rule, the most important point in an alleged prophecy is to show that it was written before its fulfilment. But here this is undisputed, since everyone admits that the whole of the Old Testament, except some of the apocryphal books, was written before the time of Christ. The second is, that the writings have been preserved by the Jews themselves, who, being adverse to the claims of Christianity, are hostile librarians, so we may be sure that not a single alteration in favour of Christianity has crept in anywhere.

We will now proceed to examine some of the strongest prophecies, avoiding all those that were only fulfilled in a figurative, or spiritual, sense ; and selecting whole passages rather than single texts, which, however applicable to Christ, might also be applicable to someone else, such as His being preceded by a messenger, or His working miracles.¹ And we will first discuss somewhat fully both the great Passion Prophecy of Isaiah, and the well-known Psalm of the Crucifixion ; then we will examine more briefly a group of prophecies referring to the Divinity of the Messiah ; and will conclude by considering an important objection.

¹ Mal. 3. 1 ; 4. 5 ; Isa. 35. 5-6.

(A.) THE PASSION PROPHECY OF ISAIAH (52. 13-53. 12).

It may be pointed out at starting that there are no variations in translation worth speaking of, and that no one denies the antiquity of the passage. Moreover, it is taken from a writing avowedly prophetic. There is scarcely any doubt that the writer thought, and intended his readers to think, that he was foretelling future events. And it forms one complete whole, closely connected together and not mixed up with any other subject. And so in regard to its fulfilment, most of the details mentioned below occurred within a few hours. We will consider first the historical, and then the doctrinal agreement.

(1.) *The Historical Agreement.*

With regard to this, the following is the translation from the Revised Version, together with the corresponding events. It will be observed that the sufferings of the Messiah are usually expressed in the past tense, and His triumph in the future, the prophet placing himself, as it were, between the two. This seems to have been to emphasise the fact that the sufferings were the *cause* of the triumph, which could not be so graphically expressed in any other way. But the Hebrew tenses are rather uncertain, and what is translated as *past* in the Revised Version is translated as *future* in the Authorised Version (e.g., the first part of 53. 2).

52. 13. 'Behold, my servant shall deal wisely, he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high.

The excellence of Christ's teaching and conduct is now generally admitted; while His exalted position as the object of worship by millions of men cannot be disputed.

14. 'Like as many were astonished at thee (his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men) so shall he sprinkle many nations ;

15. 'Kings shall shut their mouths at him : for that which had not been told them shall they see ; and that which they had not heard shall they understand.

53. 1. 'Who hath believed our report ? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed ?

2. 'For he grew up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground : he hath no form nor comeliness ;

And yet at the time of His death, which was in public so that *many* saw Him, the cruel treatment He had received (crowning with thorns, scourging, etc.) must have terribly disfigured His face and body.

But just as men were then astonished at the greatness of His sufferings, so are they now at the greatness of His triumph ; even Gentile kings are silent with reverence,¹ when contemplating such an unheard-of story, which they, unlike the Jews, had never had announced to them beforehand by prophecy.

Indeed the account of His life, which the prophet is about to declare, is so marvellous that it can scarcely be believed. The Arm (or Power) of the Lord probably refers to the Messiah, who would be recognised by hardly anyone.²

This was because He lived at a place (Nazareth) which was always regarded as *dry ground* so far as anything good was concerned ; and His appearance was humble and devoid of any outward splendour, such as might have been expected in the Messiah. And these it should be noticed were the very reasons the Jews themselves gave for not believing on Him.³ While the phrase 'He grew up *before Him* as a tender plant,' implies that God had taken a special interest in Him from His birth, as a gardener would in a choice flower, and prepared Him for His work.

¹ *Comp.* Job 29. 9.

² Isa. 40. 10 ; 51. 9 ; 1 Cor. 1. 24.

³ John 1. 46 ; 7. 52 ; Mark 6. 3.

and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. •

3. 'He was despised, and rejected of men ; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief : and as one from whom men hide their face he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

4. 'Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows : yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

5. 'But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities : the chastisement of our peace was upon him ; and with his stripes we are healed.

6. 'All we like sheep have gone astray ; we have turned every one to his own way ; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

7. 'He was oppressed, yet he humbled himself and opened not his mouth ; as a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and as a sheep that before her shearers is dumb ; yea, he opened not his mouth.

8. 'By oppression and judgment he was taken away ; and as for his generation, who among them considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living ?

This is very appropriate to the time of His Passion, when Pilate presented Him to the people, only in such a state (crowned with thorns, etc.) that when they saw Him they did not desire Him.

But they at once rejected Him (as they had done often before) and asked for Barabbas instead ; while He was despised and scorned by the soldiers at His trial, and by the Chief Priests and Rulers when He hung upon the Cross.

And His life was not only one of grief and sorrow, but such a death seemed to show that He was accursed of God, for the Jews so regarded anyone who was crucified.¹

The scourging and other ill-treatment is here alluded to.

Christ, who is frequently called the Lamb of God, not only bore His ill-treatment with the utmost patience, but refused to plead at His trial, to the utter astonishment of Pilate.²

He was not killed accidentally, nor by the mob, but had a judicial trial ; and was most unjustly condemned. While few, if any, of His contempor-

¹ Deut. 21. 23 ; Gal. 3. 13.

² Matt. 27. 14.

for the transgression of my people was he stricken (or *to whom the stroke was due*, margin, and American R.V.).

9. 'And they made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death ;

although he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

10. 'Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him ; he hath put him to grief : when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.

11. 'He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied : by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many : and he shall bear their iniquities.

aries understood that His death was for the sins of the people, to whom the punishment was really due.

He was appointed to die between two robbers, and would doubtless have been buried with ordinary criminals, had not Joseph of Arimathea intervened ; when, in strange contrast with His ignominious death, He was honourably buried by the rich (Joseph and Nicodemus), with costly spices, and in a rich man's tomb.¹

Although His judge repeatedly declared that He was innocent ; as did also His fellow-sufferer, the centurion, and his betrayer.

Yet after His death He was to see His seed, and *prolong His days*, *i.e.*, rise again from the dead. The word *seed* can scarcely mean literal children, since He was to obtain them by His death. And as it is sometimes used in Isaiah for a class of people,² it doubtless has this meaning here, and refers primarily to the spiritual children, or *disciples*, whom Christ saw after His Resurrection.

And this is strongly confirmed by their being called *the travail of His soul*, not body ; an expression which also implies that He had some intense mental struggle comparable to the bodily pains of childbirth ; which is very suitable to the mental agony which Christ endured, both in the Garden and on the Cross.³

¹ Matt. 27. 57 ; John 19. 39.

² Isa. 1. 4 ; 14. 20 ; 57. 4.

³ Mark 14. 36 ; 15. 34.

12. 'Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and shall he divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors: yet he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.'

His subsequent triumph in the Christian Church is here alluded to. While the closing words exactly agree with His dying a shameful death between two robbers; and yet praying for His murderers, 'Father, forgive them.'

It seems hardly necessary to insist on the agreement shown above; it is indisputable. The sufferings and the triumph of the future Redeemer are foretold with equal confidence and with equal clearness, though they might well have seemed incompatible.

(2.) *The Doctrinal Agreement.*

We pass on now to the *doctrinal agreement*, for the significance of the passage does not depend on these prophecies alone, though they are sufficiently remarkable, but on the *meaning* which the writer assigns to the great tragedy. It is the Christian doctrine concerning Christ's death, and not merely the events attending it, which is here insisted on. This will be best shown by adopting the previous method of parallel columns, showing in the first the chief points in the Christian doctrine, and in the other the prophet's words corresponding to them.

All mankind are sinners.

'All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way.'

Christ alone was sinless.

'My righteous servant.'

'He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.'

He suffered not for His own sins, but for those of others.

'Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.'

Nor was this the mere accidental suffering of an innocent man for a guilty one; it was a great work of atonement, an offering for sin. This is the central feature of the Christian doctrine, and it is strongly emphasised in the prophecy, which is above all the account of a *Saviour*.

And it involved not only bodily suffering, but mental and spiritual as well, due to His thus bearing the sins of the world.

And this Atonement was the fulfilment of all the Old Jewish sacrifices; so that there was a special fitness in Christ's being put to death at the time of the Jewish Passover.

And yet it availed not only for the Jews, but for all mankind.

Moreover, Christ's sacrifice was voluntary. He said that He freely laid down His life, no one took it from Him; and that

'He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace (*i.e.*, which procured our peace) was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.'

'The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.'

'For the transgression of my people was he stricken.'

'When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin.'

'And he shall bear their iniquities.'

'He bare the sin of many.'

'The travail of his soul.'

'He poured out his soul unto death.'

This is shown by the sacrificial language employed. Thus the *offering for sin* is the same word as that used in Leviticus and elsewhere for the *guilt-offering* (or *trespass-offering*, A.V.). While the curious expression 'So shall he sprinkle many nations' evidently refers to the sprinkling of the blood in the Jewish sacrifices (*e.g.*, Lev. 16. 14-19), as the same word is used, and means cleansing them from sin.

The *many nations* must include Gentiles as well as Jews; and that a Jew should have prophesied this is very remarkable, considering their exclusiveness.

'He poured out his soul unto death.' This implies that the act was voluntary, or it would be 'He died,' or 'He was put to

though His soul was *sorrowful unto death*, still this was the object for which He had come. (John 10. 18 ; 12. 37 ; Matt. 26. 38).

And yet it was in a certain sense by God's appointment, and acceptable to Him.

In consequence of this free offering of Himself, Christ founded His Church, a mighty empire, able to hold its own with the kingdoms of the world.

And His Church has been most successful in winning souls to God, which is pre-eminently what God wishes.

Moreover, Christ foresaw these fruits of His Passion, and was satisfied with them.

Lastly, Christians are justified only by Christ's Atonement.

death.' And this is rendered still clearer from the context. It was *because* He did this that He was to divide the spoil, etc. His death was thus the condition of His victory, and must clearly have been voluntary. And the same is shown by the expression *He humbled Himself*, which also implies that the humiliation was *voluntary*, *i.e.*, He let Himself be humbled.

'Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him ; he hath put him to grief.'

'Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong.'

'He shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high.'

'The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.'

'He shall see his seed.'

'He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied.'

'By his knowledge (or *by the knowledge of himself*, American R.V.) shall my righteous servant justify many : and he shall bear their iniquities.'

All this, it is plain, exactly suits the Christ of Christendom ; and it is equally plain that it does not and cannot suit anyone else, since many of the Christian doctrines are quite unique, and have no parallel in the Jewish or any other religion. This is indeed so striking, that if anyone acquainted with Christianity, but unacquainted with Isaiah, came across

the passage for the first time, he would probably ascribe it to one of St. Paul's Epistles. And certain it is that every word of it might be found there with perfect fitness.

(3.) *The modern Jewish interpretation.*

Now, what can be said on the other side? Many of the ancient Jews interpreted the passage as referring to their future Messiah;¹ but the modern Jews explain it as referring to the Jewish nation, which they say is here personified as a single man, the Servant of the Lord. And it must of course be admitted that Isaiah does frequently speak of the Jews as God's *servant*, (e.g., 'But thou Israel, my servant, and Jacob whom I have chosen,')² though he nowhere else uses the term 'my *righteous* servant,' which he does here, and which would be obviously inapplicable to the nation.

But it is important to remember that this prophecy does not stand alone, and a little before we read in a similar passage, 'And now saith the Lord that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, and that Israel be gathered unto him: (for I am honourable in the eyes of the Lord, and my God is become my strength :) yea, he saith, It is too light a thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the

¹ References are given in Edersheim's 'Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah,' 1901, vol. ii., p. 727; and i., p. 52.

² Isa. 41. 8.

end of the earth. Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and His Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers : Kings shall see and arise ; princes, and they shall worship.’¹

Here it will be noticed the Lord’s *servant* is twice distinguished from both Jacob and Israel, and evidently means the Messiah ; while His life-long preparation for His work, His sinlessness (implied in His being *honourable* in the sight of God), His bringing salvation to the Gentiles, as well as to the Jews, His humiliation in being despised of men and abhorred of the Jewish nation, and His subsequent triumph, even Gentile Kings submitting themselves to Him ; are all alluded to, much as they are in the present passage.

Again in two other passages, at least, the Lord’s *servant* is clearly a *person*, real or imaginary, and not a nation. Could the following verse, for instance, (closely fulfilled by the way in Christ,) have been possibly intended for the Jewish nation ? ‘ I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair, I hid not my face from shame and spitting.’²

No doubt there is a difficulty in the prophet thus passing from one meaning of the word *servant* to another, and various attempts have been made to explain it ; but it does not alter the fact that he does so. Perhaps the best explanation is that Israel was *intended* to be God’s servant, but owing to their sins became unfitted ; when God promised to raise up here-

¹ Isa. 49. 5-7.

² Isa. 50. 6-10 ; 42. 1-6.

after a *righteous* servant, who should do all His pleasure, and atone for Israel's failure. And we must remember the term *Servant* is applied to the Messiah by Zechariah (*My Servant, the Branch*) and also in the New Testament.¹

Moreover, the Jewish interpretation not only leaves all the minuter details of the prophecy unexplained and inexplicable, but ignores its very essence, which, as before said, is the atoning character of the sufferings. No one can say that the sufferings of the Jews were voluntary, or that they were not for their own sins, but for those of other people, which were in consequence atoned for. Or, to put the argument in other words, if the *He* refers to the Jewish nation, to whom does the *our* refer in such sentences as *He was wounded for our transgressions*? This interpretation then is hopelessly untenable, and the passage either means what Christians assert or it means nothing.

In conclusion, it must be again pointed out that all these minute historical details attending Christ's death, and all these remarkable Christian doctrines concerning it, are all found within fifteen verses of a writing avowedly prophetic, and written many centuries before the time of Christ. It would be hard to over-estimate the great improbability of all these coincidences being due to chance; indeed, such a conclusion seems incredible.

(B.) THE PSALM OF THE CRUCIFIXION (Ps. 22.).

We pass on now to another most remarkable prophecy; for this well-known Psalm describes what can

¹ Zech. 3. 8; Acts 3. 13; Phil. 2. 7.

only be regarded as a *crucifixion*. The decisive verse is of course, *They pierced my hands and my feet*; but even apart from this, the various sufferings described cannot be all endured in any other form of death, such as stoning, beheading, etc.; and the Psalm agrees with the Death of Christ, both in its numerous details, and in its whole scope and meaning. We will therefore consider this close agreement first, and then some of the chief objections.

(1.) *Its close agreement.*

We need not quote the Psalm at length, as it is so well known; but will point out the agreement verse by verse.

Ver. 1. His feeling forsaken by God, and using these actual words: 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'

2. as well as praying for deliverance during the previous night;¹

3-5. though He belonged to God's chosen people, the Jews, whose fathers had so often been helped by God before.

6. His pitiable condition in being exposed to the scorn and reproach of men, and despised of the people, apparently for some hours.

7. The manner in which they mocked Him, shaking the head, etc.,

8. and the exact words they used: *He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver him, let Him deliver him seeing He delighteth in him* (margin). These words show that the speakers themselves were Jews, and that He was thus put to death among His own nation. And the last clause can only be meant ironically in the sense that the Sufferer *claimed* that God delighted in him, claimed, that is, in some special sense to be God's beloved Son.²

9. And, as a matter of fact, God had specially watched over Him from His infancy;

¹ Mark 14. 35; Heb. 5. 7.

² Matt. 27. 43.

10. and His whole life had been dedicated to Him ; so that He could say that God had been *His* God,¹ even from His birth.¹ The human *mother*, it will be noticed, is more than once alluded to, but there is no hint that He ever had a human *father*.
11. His being abandoned by His disciples, and left without a helper ;
12. though surrounded by His enemies, described as *bulls of Bashan* ; a curious term used elsewhere for the unjust rulers of the people,² and therefore very applicable to the chief priests and rulers, who had so unjustly procured His condemnation ;
13. and who now stood round the Cross reviling Him,³ *gaping with the mouth* being a common expression of contempt.⁴ The custom of thus speaking of men as if they were animals, which seems to us so extraordinary, was thoroughly Eastern, and occurs repeatedly in the Bible.
14. His side being pierced, so that there poured out a quantity of watery fluid (mixed with clots of blood), the probable cause of this—the rupture of the heart⁵—being also hinted at ; while His bones were almost dislocated, by the weight of the suspended Body.
15. His suffering exhaustion, and extreme thirst, immediately before His death.⁶
16. His being crucified (*i.e.*, His hands and feet being pierced), the men who did this being here called *dogs* ; a term of reproach used by Christ Himself for the Gentiles, in distinction to the Jews,⁷ and thus very appropriate to the Gentile (Roman) soldiers who crucified Him.
17. And they also exposed His Body, so that His bones stood out in relief. And they then stood watching Him ;
18. and divided His garments among them, casting lots for one of them.

¹ *Comp.* Isa. 49. 5.

² Amos 4. 1 ; Ezek. 39. 18.

³ Matt. 27. 41 ; Luke 23. 35.

⁴ *E.g.*, Job 16. 10 ; Lam. 2. 16.

⁵ See 'The Physical Cause of the Death of Christ,' by Dr. Symes Thompson, 1904.

⁶ Lam. 4. 4 ; John 19. 28-30.

⁷ Matt. 15. 26.

- 19-21. Then follows a short prayer, with the assurance of deliverance. The term *sword*, as it occurs in connection with the *dog*, and *the lion's mouth*, need not be pressed literally; but may be used here (as in other cases)¹ for any violent death.
22. And now the strain suddenly changes the Sufferer is somehow restored to life, and He at once declares God's name unto His brethren. And yet as they were Jews, they must have known God's name before, so it probably means telling them something further about it. And this exactly corresponds with Christ's now declaring for the first time God's true and complete *Name* of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, unto His *brethren*, as He calls them, the Apostles.²
23. Moreover, His deliverance is of world-wide significance, and great blessings are to follow from it. These commence with the Jews;
24. and are somehow connected with God's not having despised, but having accepted, His sufferings.
25. And they include a reference to some *vows* (meaning uncertain);
26. and to a wonderful feast of which the *poor*, or *meek*, are to eat and be *satisfied*, because (unlike an ordinary meal) it is connected with their living *for ever*. It is hence often thought to refer to the Holy Communion, to which the same language seems applied; 'He that eateth this Bread shall live *for ever*.'³
27. And the blessings then extend to the Gentile nations also, even to the most distant parts of the world, who are now to become worshippers of the true God, Jehovah.
28. To Whom the whole earth, both the Jewish kingdom, and the Gentile nations, really belongs.
29. And the rich all over the earth, Gentiles as well as Jews, are also to eat of this strange feast (so it cannot be a literal meal at Jerusalem) and to worship Him, who is the God of living and dead.
30. After this we read of a *seed* serving Him, probably used here, as in Isaiah, of successive generations of disciples, each of which is to tell of this wonderful deliverance to the next;

¹ *Comp.* 2 Sam. 11. 24; 12. 9. ² Matt. 28. 10, 19; John 17. 26.

³ John 6. 58.

31. And so on to generations that are yet unborn. While the closing words, *He hath done it* (R. V.) are often taken as referring to the whole Psalm, and meaning that the work of suffering and atonement was now complete, *It is done*;¹ and they would thus correspond to Christ's closing words on the Cross, *It is finished*.

Everyone must admit that the agreement all through is very remarkable; though of course there are some objections.

(2.) *Some objections.*

The first is that there is nothing to show that the writer meant the Psalm to refer to the Messiah at all, though, strange to say, some of the Jews so interpreted it;² and therefore if there is an agreement, it is at most only a chance coincidence. But the idea of *all* these coincidences being due to chance is most improbable. And there certainly is some indication that it refers to the Messiah, since it leads up to the conversion of the Gentiles, which the other Jewish prophets always associate with the times of the Messiah; and this is very significant.

Moreover, if the Psalm does not refer to Christ, it is difficult to see to whom it does refer, since it is quite inapplicable to David, or Hezekiah, or anyone else at that time; as crucifixion was not a Jewish punishment, though dead bodies were sometimes hung on trees.³ And yet, as just said, verses 7-8 clearly show

¹ Hengstenberg, *Commentary on the Psalms*, 1867, vol. i., pp. 364, 396.

² Edersheim, vol. ii., 718, 732; Hengstenberg, *Christology of O.T.*, 1847, p. 80.

³ *E.g.*, Deut. 21. 22; Josh. 10. 26; 2 Sam. 4. 12.

that the Sufferer was put to death among Jews. This strange anomaly exactly suits the time of Christ, when Judæa was a Roman province, so that a Jew might be put to death among his own countrymen, but not in the Jewish manner by stoning, but by crucifixion.

Many of the *details* also are quite inapplicable. David, for instance, never had his garments divided among his enemies; and yet (even apart from our Gospels) there can be no doubt that the garments of Christ were so divided, as the clothes of a prisoner were the usual perquisites of the guard who executed him.

And any such reference (to David, etc.) is rendered still more improbable, because the sufferer appears to have no consciousness of *sin*, and never laments his own wickedness, as the psalmists so frequently do when writing about themselves. And here also the Psalm is entirely applicable to Christ, since His unconsciousness of sin was (as we shall see in the next chapter) one of the most striking features in His character. Nor again did the deliverance of David in any way lead to the *conversion of the Gentiles*, which, as just said, is the grand climax of the Psalm, and which alone excludes all other interpretations.

But in any case this objection (which is also made to other Old Testament prophecies) is unsound; for it simply begs the question as to *who* was their real author. Was it the human prophet, or was it God Who inspired the prophet to write as he did? And the prophets themselves emphatically declared that it was

the latter. They did not claim to be specially gifted men, but merely the mouthpiece of Jehovah. The word of the Lord came unto them, or a vision 'was granted unto them, and they had to proclaim it. And therefore there is no reason for thinking that they either knew, or thought they knew, the whole meaning of their prophecies; and the objection falls to the ground at once.¹ And though the present Psalm is not avowedly prophetic, yet as it actually suits the life of Christ in so many particulars, we seem bound to consider it so.

Secondly, it is said that some of the clauses, especially that about the *vows* in verse 25, do not seem to be applicable to Christ. But even if we admit this, it does not destroy the striking agreement in other places; just as a man's portrait may seem to us to be defective in some respects, and yet we may have no doubt that it is his portrait. Perhaps the best explanation as to the *vows* is that it was the custom among the Jews, when in trouble, to vow that if delivered, they would offer a sacrifice to the Lord, which was afterwards given as a feast to the poor. And therefore as the present feast is obviously not a literal one, the vows need not be taken literally either.

The third objection is, that some of the events fulfilling this, and other Old Testament prophecies, never happened, but were purposely invented. This, however, destroys altogether the moral character of the Evangelists, who are supposed to tell deliberate falsehoods, in order to get a pretended fulfilment of

¹ 1 Pet. 1. 10-11.

an old prophecy. And the difficulty of admitting this is very great. Moreover, such explanations can only apply to a very few cases ; since, as a rule, the events occurred in *public*, and must therefore have been well known at the time.

And even in those cases where the event was so trivial, that it might possibly have been invented, such an explanation is often untenable. Take, for example, the manner in which Christ on the cross was mocked by His enemies, who said, ' He trusted in God, let him deliver him now if he desireth him.'¹ A more probable incident under the circumstances can scarcely be imagined, the chief priests quoting the familiar language (just as men sometimes quote the Bible now) without thinking of its real significance. But, supposing the words were never uttered, is it conceivable that the Evangelist should have invented them merely to get a pretended fulfilment of this Psalm, where the Crucified One is mocked with these identical words, and yet have never pointed out the fulfilment himself, but have trusted to the chance of his readers discovering it ?

None of these objections, then, are of much importance ; while the agreement of the Psalm with the events attending the death and Resurrection of Christ, seems, as in the previous case, to be far too exact to be accidental.

(C.) THE DIVINITY OF THE MESSIAH.

Our last example shall be of a different kind from the others. It is that there exist in the Old Testament

¹ Matt. 27. 43.

several passages which, taken in their plain literal meaning, state or imply that the future Messiah was to be not only Superhuman, but Divine. And considering the strong Monotheism of the Jews this is very remarkable. The following are three of the most important :—

‘ For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given ; and the government shall be upon his shoulder : and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.’¹ Here we have a plain statement of the Divinity of One Who should be born a child. The two words translated *Mighty God* are incapable of any other translation ; and no other is suggested for them in the margin of either the Authorised or Revised Version, while the same two words occur in the next chapter, where they plainly mean *Mighty God* and nothing else. Moreover, the term *Everlasting Father* is literally *Father of Eternity* (see margin) and means the Eternal One. This is another divine title, and does not conflict with the Christian doctrine that it was the Son, and not the Father, Who became Incarnate. And it is significant that a few verses before it is implied that the Ministry of this future Messiah should commence in the land of Zebulon, and Naphtali, by the Sea of Galilee ; where, as a matter of fact, Christ’s Ministry did commence.²

‘ But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, which art little to be among the thousands of Judah, out of thee shall one come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel ; whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.’³ Here we have a prophecy of the birth of One who had

¹ Isa. 9. 6 ; 10. 21.

² Isa. 9. 1-2.

³ Mic. 5. 2.

existed *from everlasting* ; thus showing the Pre-existence and apparent Divinity of the Messiah, who was to be born at Bethlehem, where, again, as a matter of fact, Christ actually was born.

‘Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts.’¹ The word translated *fellow* is only found elsewhere in Leviticus, where it is used eleven times, and is usually translated *neighbour*, and always implies an equality between the two persons.² Thus God speaks of the Shepherd who was to be slain with the sword (a term, as before said, used for any violent death), as equal with Himself, and yet at the same time Man ; and, therefore, no one but a Messiah who is both God and Man—*Fellow-God* as well as *fellow-man*—can satisfy the language.

And here again the reference to Christ is confirmed by the fact that not merely one, but a whole series of incidents in His Passion are also alluded to, in some of which His Divinity is likewise asserted. Thus He is introduced as *the King of the Jews* (or of Jerusalem³), which was emphatically His title at Passiontide ; for He was welcomed as such by the multitude, claimed to be such at His trial, was referred to as such by Pilate, was allowed to be such by those present, and as such was condemned, mocked, and crucified.⁴ And the same verse foretells the humble manner in which He

¹ Zech. 13. 7.

² Lev. 6. 2 ; 18. 20 ; 19. 11, 15, 17 ; 24. 19 ; 25. 14, 15, 17.

³ Zech. 9. 9-11. .

⁴ *E.g.*, Luke 19. 38 ; Mark 15. 2, 9, 12 ; John 19. 16 ; Mark 15. 30, 37.

(the Righteous Saviour) rode into Jerusalem on an ass, as well as the rejoicing with which He was received ; and this is followed by a reference to His future world-wide, though peaceful, dominion, and the new Covenant which He made by His blood.¹

Later on we have the fact that He (the Lord Jehovah) should be sold for thirty pieces of silver, the money being cast down in the House of the Lord, and afterwards given to the potter ; and also that He (again the Lord Jehovah) should have His Side pierced ; His Atonement for Sin ; His having (apparently) cast out unclean spirits ; His hands being wounded, and His being forsaken by His disciples.²

These are, it is true, expressed in figurative language, and often mixed up with other subjects, so that no single instance affords of itself a strong argument ; though the frequent repetition of the phrase *in that day*, which occurs seventeen times in these chapters (9-14), shows that there must be some real connection between them. And, anyhow, the fact of their all occurring so close together, and all leading up to the violent death of a *man*, who was yet the *fellow*, or *equal*, with God, can scarcely be due to accident. While a few verses further on there is a significant reference to the destruction of Jerusalem (the previous siege, and its horrors, having been already alluded to), and also to the conversion of the Gentiles, the Lord Jehovah being recognised as King over all the earth.³

The Divinity of the Messiah is also involved in some

¹ Mark 14. 24.

² Zech. 11. 12-13 ; 12. 10 ; 13. 1-7.

³ Zech. 14. 2, 9 ; 12. 2 ; 11. 9.

hints which occur in the Old Testament as to the doctrine of the *Trinity*. This claims to be a fuller and more complete view of the Deity than the Monotheism of the Jews ; but in no way inconsistent with it, for Christianity equally asserts that there is but one God ; though it also affirms that in this Godhead there are three distinct Persons.

Now it is, to say the least, a remarkable fact that this doctrine seems hinted at in the Old Testament. For instance, the Hebrew word for God, *Elohim*, is a plural word, though, strange to say, it generally takes a singular adjective and verb. Thus if we tried to represent it in English, the first verse of the Bible would read, 'In the beginning the Gods, He created the heaven and the earth.' Attempts have of course been made to reduce the significance of this by pointing out that a few other Hebrew words, such as *lord* and *master*, sometimes do the same, or by regarding it as a survival from some previous polytheistic religion, or else as being the plural of Majesty, a sort of royal *We*. This latter, however, does not seem to have been in use in early times, and never occurs in the Bible, where kings always speak of themselves in the singular.¹

But anyhow the fact remains that the Jews used a plural name for God with a singular verb. And this is rendered all the more striking because it often occurs in connection with another name, Jehovah, which is always singular ; thus Jehovah Elohim, literally *the Lord the Gods*. The latter word, it may

¹ E.g., Gen. 41. 41 ; Ezra 6. 12 ; Dan. 4. 6.

be added, when used of false gods, takes a plural verb.

Moreover, the Deity is at times represented as speaking in the plural number.¹ For instance, He says, *Let us make man in our image*, as if consulting with other Persons of the Godhead ; since it is obvious that the expression cannot refer to angels, or other beings, who are themselves created, and not fellow Creators. And yet just afterwards we read, 'God made man in *his* own image,' thus showing a unity as well as a plurality in the Godhead. Another and still more remarkable expression is, 'Behold, the man is become as one of us.' This cannot possibly be explained as a 'plural of Majesty'; for though a king might speak of himself as *We* or *Us*, no king ever spoke of himself as *one of Us*. Such an expression can only be used when there are other persons of similar rank with the speaker ; and therefore when used by God, it necessarily implies that there are other Divine Persons. So again God is represented as saying, 'Whom shall *I* send, and who will go for *us*?' which also seems to indicate a plurality in unity ; while the preceding *thrice* Holy points to this being a Trinity.² The existence of such passages seems to require some explanation, and Christianity alone can explain them.

(D.) CONCLUSION.

Before concluding this chapter there is an important objection still to be considered. Why, it is said, if these prophecies really refer to Christ, are they not plainer ? Surely if God wished to foretell the future,

¹ Gen. 1. 26 ; 3. 22 ; 11. 7.

² Isa. 6. 8.

He would have done it better than this ; and a few words added here and there would have made the reference to Christ indisputable. No doubt they would, but possibly God did not wish to make the reference indisputable. And perhaps if the prophecies had been plainer, they would have prevented their own fulfilment. Had the Jews known for certain that Christ was their Messiah, they could scarcely have crucified Him ; and it seems to many that the prophecies are already about as plain as they could be without doing this.

Moreover, the prophets, as far as we can judge, did not receive their revelations audibly and in a connected manner, but fell into a trance when they saw visions. And this explains many of the peculiarities of their writings. Future events are often represented in the present or past tense ; future persons are addressed, and even pointed to as if on a stage (Behold, etc.) ; while at other times they are represented as speaking ; all of which tends to some obscurity. The important point, however, is not whether the prophecies might not have been plainer, but whether they are not already too plain to be accidental.

Lastly, we must notice the cumulative nature of the evidence. We have only examined a few instances, but, as said before, Messianic prophecies of some kind, more or less distinct, occur at intervals all through the Old Testament. And though some of those commonly brought forward seem weak and fanciful, there are still numbers of others which are not. And here as elsewhere this has a double bearing on the argument.

In the first place, it does not at all increase the

difficulty of the *Christian* interpretation ; for twenty prophecies are practically no more difficult to admit than two. Indeed, the fact that instead of being a few isolated examples, they form a complete series, rather lessens the difficulty than otherwise.

On the other hand, it increases the difficulty of *any other* interpretation enormously ; for twenty prophecies are far more difficult to deny than two. If one is explained as a lucky coincidence, this will not account for the next ; if that is got rid of by some unnatural interpretation of the words, it will not account for the third, and so on indefinitely. The difficulties are thus not only great in themselves, but are all cumulative ; and hence together they seem insuperable. Anyhow, it is clear that these Prophecies afford a strong additional argument in favour of Christianity.

CHAPTER XX.

THAT THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST CONFIRMS THE TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY.

The character of Christ can only be deduced from the New Testament, any other Christ being purely imaginary.

(A.) HIS TEACHING.

- (1.) Its admitted excellence.
- (2.) Two slight objections.
- (3.) His unconsciousness of sin ; so He must have been a perfect Man.

(B.) HIS CLAIMS.

He asserted—

- (1.) That He was Superhuman—claiming to be the Ruler, Redeemer, and Final Judge of the world.
- (2.) That He was Divine — claiming an Equality, Unity, and Pre-existence with God.
- (3.) And this is how all His contemporaries, both friends and foes, understood Him.

(C.) THE GREAT ALTERNATIVE.

Christ cannot, therefore, have been merely a good man ; He was either *God*, as He claimed to be, or else a *bad* man, for making such claims. But the latter view is disproved by His Moral Character.

IN this chapter we propose to consider the Character of Christ, and its bearing on the truth of Christianity. Now our knowledge of Christ's character can only be derived from the four Gospels ; indeed, a Christ with

any other character assigned to Him is a purely imaginary being, and might as well be called by some other name. Taking, then, the Gospels as our guide, what is the character of Christ? Obviously this can be best deduced from His own recorded *teaching* and *claims*, both of which are fortunately given at great length; so we will consider these first, and then the *great alternative* which they force upon us.

(A.) THE TEACHING OF CHRIST.

Under this head we will first notice the admitted excellence of Christ's teaching, then two objections which are sometimes made, and lastly His unconsciousness of sin.

(I.) *Its admitted excellence.*

To begin with, the excellence of Christ's moral teaching hardly needs to be insisted on at the present day; it is that now acknowledged by the civilised world. And rationalists as well as Christians have exhausted language to proclaim its merits. For instance, to quote a few examples:—

'Religion cannot be said to have made a bad choice in pitching on this man as the ideal representative and guide of humanity; nor even now would it be easy, even for an unbeliever, to find a better translation of the rule of virtue from the abstract into the concrete, than to endeavour so to live that Christ should approve our life.'—*J. S. Mill*.¹

'Jesus remains to humanity an inexhaustible source of moral regenerations.' And again, 'In Him is con-

¹ 'Nature, the Unity of Religion and Theism,' 2nd edit., 1874 p. 255.

densed all that is good and lofty in our nature.'—*E. Renan*.¹

'The teaching of Jesus, however, carried morality to the sublimest point attained, or even attainable, by humanity.' And again, 'He presented the rare spectacle of a life, so far as we can estimate it, uniformly noble and consistent with His own lofty principles.'—*Author of 'Supernatural Religion'*.²

'It was reserved for Christianity to present to the world an ideal character, which, through all the changes of eighteen centuries, has inspired the hearts of men with an impassioned love ; has shown itself capable of acting on all ages, nations, temperaments, and conditions ; has been not only the highest pattern of virtue, but the strongest incentive to its practice ; and has exercised so deep an influence that it may be truly said that the simple record of three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and to soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers, and all the exhortations of moralists.'—*W. E. H. Lecky*.³

These quotations are only samples of many which might be given ; but it is practically undisputed that the morality taught by Christ is the best the world has ever seen. And it is also undisputed that His life was in entire harmony with His teaching. He lived, as far as we can judge, a holy and blameless life, and His character has never been surpassed in history or fiction. He had no prototype, and has had no successor.

¹ 'Life of Jesus,' New York, 1864, pp. 370, 375.

² 2nd edit., vol. ii., p. 487.

³ 'History of European Morals,' 3rd edit., 1877, vol. ii., p. 8.

(2.) *Two slight objections.*

There are, however, two slight objections. The first is that Christ's teaching was not *original*; and, strictly speaking, this is perhaps true. Something similar to all He taught has been discovered in more ancient times, either in Egypt, India, China, or elsewhere. But this hardly affects the argument. An unlearned Jew living at Nazareth cannot be supposed to have derived his teaching from the works of Confucius, Zoroaster, and others, while it is a vast improvement on all of them put together.

The important point is, that there was nothing among the Jews of His own time which could have produced, or even have invented, such a character. He was immeasurably better than all His contemporaries, and the attempts of some critics to show that His teaching was only a little superior to that of the Jewish Rabbis, from whom He is supposed to have learnt it, fail hopelessly. For if the teaching was so similar, why has the effect been so different? All the Rabbis put together have not exerted an influence on the world a thousandth part that of Christ.

The second objection refers to *certain portions* of Christ's teaching. For example, He advocates the non-resistance of evil, and seems to place virginity above marriage to an exaggerated extent.¹ I have never seen a satisfactory explanation of the latter passage; but it is obvious on the face of it that it cannot be meant for universal application, or it would lead to the extinction of the human race. It can only

¹ Matt. 5. 39; 19. 12.

be a *counsel of perfection*, similar to that of giving away the whole of one's property.

Again, several of the *parables* are said to be unjust, such as that of the wedding garment, the workmen in the vineyard, and the unrighteous steward. But parables cannot be pressed literally, and the interpretation put on these by different writers is so various that no valid objection can be founded on them. We will, however, consider the last, which is the one most often objected to.

Here it will be remembered that though the steward had been apparently guilty of dishonesty, he was *commended* because he had done wisely.¹ But the idea that the parable was meant to advocate dishonesty is out of the question. Nor is the explanation hard to find. Suppose at the present day an ingenious robbery was committed, and a person said that he could not help admiring the scoundrel for his cleverness. This would not imply an approval of dishonesty, for two reasons ; partly because the man was still called a scoundrel, and partly because he was not praised as a whole, but a particular part of his conduct was singled out for admiration, which was not his dishonesty but his cleverness. So in the case before us. The steward was still called *unrighteous*, and only a part of his conduct was singled out for commendation, which was not his dishonesty but his *wisdom*. The obvious meaning is that wisdom is so desirable that it is to be commended even in worldly matters, and even in a bad cause ; and therefore still more to be aimed at in

¹ Luke 16. 8.

religious matters, and in a good cause. This objection, then, is quite untenable. The difficulties we meet with are merely like spots on the sun, and would scarcely be thought difficulties in any other religion.

(3.) *Christ's unconsciousness of sin.*

A most remarkable point has now to be noticed. It is that, notwithstanding His perfect moral teaching, there is not in the character of Christ the slightest consciousness of *sin*. In all His numerous discourses, and even in His prayers, there is not a single word which implies that He thought He ever had done, or ever could do, anything wrong Himself. He is indeed most careful to avoid implying this, even incidentally. Thus He does not say, 'If *we* forgive men their trespasses,' etc., but 'If *ye*,' as the former might imply that He, as well as they, had need of the Father's forgiveness.¹ And He never even prayed (so far as we know) *with* His disciples; His prayers as the Sinless One were so different from theirs as sinners, that they could not be blended together. Moreover, though He blamed self-righteousness in others, and exhorted them to repentance, He never hinted that He had any need of it Himself.

And all this is the more striking when we reflect that good men are, as a rule, most conscious of their faults. But yet here was One who carried moral goodness to its utmost limit, whose precepts are admittedly perfect, and yet who never for a moment thought that He was not fulfilling them Himself. Such a character is absolutely unique in the world's

¹ Matt. 6. 14.

history. It can only be explained by saying that Christ was not only a good man, but a *perfect* man, since goodness without perfection would only have made Him more conscious of the faults He had. And yet if we admit this, we must admit more ; for perfection is not a human attribute, and needs a good deal of accounting for.

(B.) THE CLAIMS OF CHRIST.

We pass on now to the claims of Christ ; and His high moral character would plainly lead us to place the utmost confidence in what He said about Himself. Unfortunately, His statements are so well known that it is hard to appreciate their real force and significance. What, we must ask, would they have sounded like, and what would they have meant, when first uttered ? For He claimed, as we shall see, to be both Superhuman and Divine ; and this is how all His contemporaries, both friends and foes, understood Him. And though it is impossible to add to the marvel of such claims, yet the fact that nothing in any way resembling them is to be found among the Jewish Prophets helps us at least to realise their uniqueness.

(I.) *His Claim to be Superhuman.*

This is shown by three main arguments, for Christ declared that He was the Ruler, Redeemer, and final Judge of the world. In the first place, Christ claimed to be the *Ruler* of the world, saying in so many words that all things had been delivered unto Him, and that He possessed all authority, both in heaven and on earth. Moreover, this dominion was to be equally complete over the hearts of His followers. Their loyalty

to Him was the one thing needful ; and He claimed absolute self-surrender, even to giving up all human ties, however close.¹

Secondly, Christ claimed to be the *Redeemer* of the world. He distinctly asserted that He came to give His life a ransom for many, and that His blood was shed for the remission of sins.²

Thirdly, Christ claimed to be the final *Judge* of the world. This stupendous claim alone shows that He considered Himself quite above and distinct from the rest of mankind. While they were all to be judged according to their works, He was to be the Judge Himself, coming in the clouds of heaven with thousands of angels. And His decision was to be final and without appeal, and apparently based on a man's behaviour towards Himself. And this tremendous claim, be it observed, does not depend on single texts or passages, but occurs all through the Synoptic Gospels.³ Throughout the whole of His Ministry—from His Sermon on the Mount to His trial before Caiaphas—He persistently asserted that He was to be the final Judge of the world. It is hardly credible that a mere man, however presumptuous, should ever have made such a claim as this. Can we imagine anyone doing so at the present day? and what should we think of him if he did?

The above passages show clearly the Superhuman character of Christ. They are, however, just capable of an *Arian* interpretation, which is, that though Christ

¹ Matt. 11. 27 ; 28. 18 ; Luke 10. 22 ; Matt. 10. 37.

² Matt. 20. 28 ; 26. 28 ; Mark 10. 45 ; 14. 24.

³ Matt. 7. 22 ; 10. 32 ; 13. 41 ; 16. 13-16, 27 ; 19. 28 ; 24. 30 ; 25. 31-46 ; 26. 64 ; and similar passages in the other Gospels.

was far above men, and even angels, yet He was not, strictly speaking, God. But this opinion has few supporters at the present day ; and persons who now admit that Christ was Superhuman generally admit that He was Divine, which, as we shall see, He also claimed to be.

(2.) *His Claim to be Divine.*

Like the preceding, this is shown by three main arguments ; for Christ declared His Equality, Unity, and Pre-existence with God. In the first place, Christ claimed an *Equality* with God. He distinctly asserted that the same honour should be given to Himself as to God the Father ; that men should believe in Him as well as in God ; that He and the Father would together dwell in the souls of men ; and that He, like the Father, had the power of sending the Holy Spirit of God.¹ He also ordered that men were to be baptized into His Name as well as into that of the Father, and promised that whenever and wherever His disciples were gathered together, He would be in the midst of them, even unto the end of the world, thus assuming a divine omnipresence.²

Secondly, Christ claimed a *Unity* with God. He did not assert that He was another God, but said distinctly that He and the Father were *One* ; that He was in the Father, and the Father in Him ; that whoever beheld Him beheld the Father ; and that whoever had seen Him had seen the Father.³ These latter texts cannot,

¹ John 5. 23 ; 14. 1, 23 ; 16. 7 ; see also 5. 18.

² Matt. 18. 20 ; 28. 19, 20.

³ John 10. 30 ; 17. 21 ; 12. 45 ; 14. 9, 10.

of course, be pressed literally, as few would maintain that Christ was really God *the Father*. But just as if a human father and son were *extremely* alike, we might say that if you had seen the son, you had seen the father ; so if Christ was truly God—God the Son—the *express image* of His Father, the same language might be used. It would at least be intelligible. But it would be quite unintelligible, if Christ was merely a *good man*. Can we imagine the best man that ever lived saying, If you have seen me, you have seen God ?

Thirdly, Christ claimed a *Pre-existence* with God. He asserted that He had descended out of heaven ; that He had come down from heaven ; that He came out from the Father and was come into the world ; and that even before its creation He had shared God's glory.¹ And in another passage, '*Before Abraham was, I am,*'² He not only claims pre-existence to Abraham, but implies that this was an eternal existence, irrespective of time, since the words are not, *Before Abraham was I was*, but *I am*. While, the use of this latter phrase, which was the solemn name God gave Himself in the Old Testament, shows that the Speaker wished to represent Himself as being God.

The above passages show plainly that Christ claimed to be *Divine*. On the other side we have the passage where He objects to the ruler calling Him *good*, saying that the word was only applicable to God.³ But here He was probably not denying that He really was good,

¹ John 3. 13 ; 6. 38 ; 16. 28 ; 17. 5.

² John 8. 58 ; Exod. 3. 14.

³ Luke 18. 19.

but merely showing the inconsistency of anyone calling Him so, who was not one of His disciples, and did not acknowledge His Divine claims. And it is interesting to note that when thus regarded as a mere earthly teacher, Christ refused to be called *good*.

Some other texts are often quoted, but they obviously refer to Christ's *human* nature alone, and will be examined in Chapter XXIII. We need not consider them here, for if (as Christians believe) Christ was both God and Man, there is no difficulty in the fact that He should sometimes speak of Himself as Divine, and sometimes as human. It is precisely what we should expect on the Christian theory, though of course on any other it introduces an element of inconsistency into His character. Anyhow, it does not alter the fact that Christ did repeatedly claim to be both superhuman and Divine.

(3.) *How these Claims were understood at the time.*

We have now to consider how these claims were understood at the time. And first, as to *Christ's friends*. We have overwhelming evidence that after His Resurrection all the disciples and early Christians believed their Master to be both superhuman and Divine. And to realise the full significance of this, we must remember that they were not polytheists, who did not mind how many gods they believed in, and were willing to deify Roman Emperors or anyone else ; but they were strict monotheists. They firmly believed that there was only one God, and yet they firmly believed that Christ was Divine. This is shown throughout the New Testament.

For instance, the authors of the Synoptic Gospels record His miraculous Birth, Resurrection, and Ascension, as well as His numerous miracles, and other signs of Divine power. And, as we have before pointed out, they always relate that Christ performed His miracles *by His own authority*, which seems to imply His Divinity, especially when combined with the fact that He could confer the power of working miracles on others.¹

And as to the Fourth Gospel, it begins with asserting Christ's Divinity in express terms, saying that *the Word*, who afterwards became flesh, *was God*. And it appropriately ended, before the last chapter was added, with St. Thomas declaring this same belief, when he addressed Christ as *my Lord and my God*, which titles He fully accepted.² And yet immediately afterwards, the author says he wrote his Gospel to convince men that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. Evidently then this expression, *the Son of God*, meant to him, and therefore presumably to other New Testament writers, who use it frequently, that Christ was truly God—God the Son—*my Lord and my God*—in the fullest and most complete sense.

It is also worth noting that several passages, which in the Old Testament refer to Jehovah, are in the Gospels applied to Christ. Thus we read how, on one occasion, Isaiah saw the glory of the *Lord of Hosts*; and St. John quotes some of the words, saying that Isaiah spoke them, when he saw *Christ's* glory.³ In

¹ Matt. 10. 8; Luke 9. 1.

² John 1. 1; 20. 28.

³ Isa. 6. 1-10; John 12. 41.

the same way the Synoptic Gospels refer the prophecy as to the messenger of *the Lord our God*, to the messenger of *Christ*.¹

With regard to the *Acts* a counter - argument is sometimes drawn from St. Peter's speaking of Christ as 'a *man* approved of God unto you by mighty works,' etc., thus implying, it is urged, that St. Peter did not know Him to be more than man.² But as he says he was only appealing to what his *hearers* knew to be true (*even as ye yourselves know*), how else could he have put it? His hearers did not know that Christ was God; they did know that He was *a man approved of God* by many wonderful miracles, *because they had seen them*. Moreover, in other places the *Acts* bear strong witness to the Divinity of Christ, both directly as when St. Paul speaks of *the Church of God which He purchased with His own blood*,³ and indirectly as when the Apostles are represented as working their miracles, not in the Name of God the Father, but in that of Christ.⁴

Next, as to the Book of Revelation. The evidence this affords is important, because many critics⁵ who dispute the genuineness of the Gospels and Acts, yet allow that this Book was written by St. John. And if so, it shows conclusively that one at least of Christ's intimate followers firmly believed in His Divinity. For he not only speaks of Him as the object of universal worship both in heaven and on earth, but describes

¹ Isa. 40. 3; Matt. 3. 3; Mark 1. 3; Luke 3. 4.

² Acts 2. 22.

³ Acts 20. 28.

⁴ E.g., Acts 3. 6; 4. 10.

⁵ E.g., the author of 'Supernatural Religion.'

Him as the *First and the Last*, which is the title used by God in the Old Testament, and which is plainly inapplicable to anyone else.¹ And we may ask, 'is it conceivable that an intimate friend of Christ should have believed him to be the Everlasting God, unless He had claimed to be so Himself, and had supported His claim by working miracles, and rising from the dead? Is it not, rather, certain that nothing but the most *overwhelming* proof would ever have convinced a Jew (of all persons) that a fellow Man, with whom he had lived for years, and whom he had seen put to death (and that in the very way which the Jews considered accursed of God), was Himself the Lord Jehovah.'²

Equally important evidence is afforded by St. Paul's Epistles. For though he is not likely to have known Christ intimately, he must have been acquainted with numbers who did. And his early conversion, before A.D. 35, together with the fact that he had previously persecuted the Church at Jerusalem, and afterwards visited some of the Apostles there, must have made him well acquainted with the Christian doctrines from the very first. Indeed, he tells us himself, that 'when he visited the Apostles, he *laid before them* the Gospel which he preached, so as to make sure that it was the same as what they preached.'³ And all through his Epistles he bears witness to the *superhuman* character of Christ; declaring, among other things, His sinlessness, and that He is the Ruler, Redeemer,

¹ Rev. 1. 17, 18; 2. 8; 5. 11-14; 22. 12, 13; Isa. 44. 6.

² Deut. 21. 23; Gal. 3. 13

³ Gal. 2. 2, 9.

and final Judge of the world, as well as being its Creator.¹

He also bears witness to His *Divine* character ; for he asserts more than once that God *sent* His Son into the world, thus showing the pre-existence of Christ. And he implies the same when he says that though Christ 'was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor ;' the latter words referring to His condescension in becoming Man, when as God He had possessed all riches.² While in other passages he asserts His Divinity in so many words, saying that He is over all, God blessed for ever ; that we shall all stand before the Judgment-seat of God, which elsewhere he calls the Judgment-seat of Christ ; that He was originally in the form of God (*i.e.*, in a state of Deity), and on an equality with God, before He became incarnate, and took the form of Man ; that in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily ; that He is our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, Who gave Himself for us ; and that the Psalmist prophesied of Him when he said, ' Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.'³

This latter passage, from the *Hebrews*, was perhaps not written by St. Paul, but this makes it all the more valuable, as the Epistle is generally dated, from internal evidence, before the destruction of Jerusalem, A.D. 70 ; and we have thus *another* early witness to the Divinity of Christ ;—and a valuable one too, for

¹ 2 Cor. 5. 16, 21 ; Rom. 14. 9 ; 1 Cor. 15. 3 ; 2 Cor. 5. 10 ; Col. 1. 16.

² Rom. 8. 3 ; Gal. 4. 4 ; 2 Cor. 8. 9.

³ Rom. 9. 5 ; 14. 10 ; 2 Cor. 5. 10 ; Phil. 2. 6 ; Col. 2. 9 ; Titus 2. 13 ; Heb. 1. 8.

he distinctly implies that there was nothing new in the doctrine, but that it had been believed by Christians from the very first.¹ •

The most important text on the other side is where St. Paul says there is *one God the Father*, and *one Lord Jesus Christ*,² which is quoted in the Nicene Creed. But though the statement is a difficult one, it cannot be pressed as implying that Christ is not *God*; for if so it would equally imply that the Father was not *Lord*, which few would contend was St. Paul's meaning.

With regard to the above passages, many of which occur in the admittedly genuine Epistles, it is important to notice that the allusions are all incidental. St. Paul does not attempt to prove the superhuman and Divine character of Christ, but refers to it as if it were undisputed. He evidently believed it himself, and took for granted that his readers did so too. And his readers were not private individuals, but large bodies of Christians. They included his own converts at Corinth and elsewhere, the converts of other Apostles at Rome, which was a place he had not then visited, and a strong party of opponents in Galatia, with whom he was arguing. It is clear, then, that these doctrines were not peculiar to St. Paul, but were the common property of all Christians from the earliest times. And when combined with the previous evidence, this leaves no doubt as to how Christ's *friends* understood His claims. Whatever they may have thought of them before the Resurrection, that event convinced them that they were true, and they never hesitated in this belief.

¹ Heb. 2. 1-4; 4. 14.

² 1 Cor. 8. 6; Eph. 4. 4-6.

But next as to *Christ's foes*. The evidence here is equally convincing. In St. John's Gospel we read that on several occasions during His life, when Christ asserted His superhuman and Divine character, the Jews wanted to kill Him in consequence ; often avowing their reason for doing so with the utmost frankness. ' For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.'¹ And in thus doing they were only acting in accordance with their law, which expressly commanded a blasphemer to be stoned.

In none of these instances, it is to be noticed, did Christ repudiate the claims attributed to Him, or say He had been misunderstood. In fact, in only one case did He offer any explanation whatever. He then appealed to the passage in the Old Testament, ' I said, Ye are gods,' and asserted that He was much better entitled to the term, since He was sent into the world by the Father, and did the works of the Father. And He then reasserted His unity with the Father, which was the very point objected to by the Jews.

Moreover, not only during His life did Christ make these claims to be Divine, but He persevered with them even when it brought about His death. It is undisputed that the Jews judged Him worthy of death for *blasphemy*, and for nothing else. This is the teaching not of one Gospel alone, but of each of the four.² Every biography of Christ we possess represents this as the real charge against Him ; though, of course,

¹ John 10. 33 ; see also 5. 18 ; 8. 59 ; 11. 8 ; Lev. 24. 16.

² Matt. 26. 65 ; Mark 14. 64 ; Luke 22. 71 ; John 19. 7.

when tried before the Roman governor that of disloyalty to Cæsar was brought up as well.

There is but one conclusion to be drawn from all this. It is that Christ did really claim to be both superhuman and Divine ; that He deliberately and repeatedly asserted these claims during His life ; that the hostility of the Jews was thereby aroused, who frequently wanted to kill Him ; that He never repudiated these claims, but, on the contrary, persevered with them to the end ; and was finally put to death in consequence.

(C.) THE GREAT ALTERNATIVE.

We pass on now to the *great alternative*, which is forced upon us by combining the teaching and the claims of Christ. Before pointing out its importance, we must notice a favourite method of trying to evade the difficulty, which is by saying that the teaching of Christ occurs in the *Synoptic Gospels*, and the claims in the *Fourth* ; so that if we deny the accuracy of this single Gospel the difficulty is solved. But unfortunately for this objection, though the Divine claims occur chiefly in the Fourth Gospel, the superhuman claims are most prominent in the other three ; and we have purposely chosen all the passages illustrating them from the *Synoptic Gospels alone*. And these claims are equally fatal to His moral character if He were only a man. For no good man, and indeed very few bad ones, could be so fearfully presumptuous as to claim to be the absolute Ruler of the world, still less to be its Redeemer, and, least of all, to be its one and only Judge hereafter.

This objection, then, must be put aside, and we are forced to conclude that the perfect moral teaching of Christ was accompanied by continual assertions of His own superhuman and Divine character. And as this is a point about which He must have known, it is clear that the statements must have been either true or intentionally false. He must, therefore, have been Divine, or else a deliberate impostor. In other words, the Christ of the Gospels—and history knows of no other—could not have been merely a good man. He was either *God* as He claimed to be, or else a *bad man* for making such claims. This is the *Great Alternative*.

Moreover, it is absolutely unique in the world's history. The founders of other religions may have had great moral virtues, and may yet have taught erroneous doctrines ; but, as a rule, there is no reason for doubting their sincerity ; they believed what they said. Of course there have been religious impostors as well, but then their moral character was at fault. In Christ alone we have a Man Whose moral character and teaching have fascinated the world for centuries ; and yet Who, unless His own claims were true, must have been guilty of the grossest egotism, falsehood, and blasphemy. This is the only logical conclusion to be drawn from the facts we have been considering, and all attempts to evade it fail hopelessly.

Now what effect has this on our present inquiry as to the truth of Christianity ? Plainly it affords a strong argument in its favour. For the moral teaching of its Founder is shown to be not only the most perfect the world has ever seen, but combined with a sense of

entire sinlessness which is absolutely unique among men. Both of these, however, are combined with claims to a superhuman and Divine character, which, unless they are correct, place their Author at the opposite extreme of the moral scale. In short, unless Christianity is true, its Founder must have been not only the very *best* of men, but also one of the very *worst* ; and this is a dilemma from which there is no escape.

CHAPTER XXI.

THAT THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY ALSO CONFIRMS ITS TRUTH.

(A.) ITS EARLY TRIUMPHS.

- (1.) Its enormous difficulties.
- (2.) Its marvellous success.
- (3.) The so-called *natural* causes of success : they all imply the truth of the Religion.
- (4.) Contrast with Mahometanism.

(B.) ITS SUBSEQUENT HISTORY.

- (1.) Its vitality* in the past ; very remarkable.
- (2.) Its effect at the present ; very beneficial.
- (3.) Its prospects in the future ; very hopeful. Objection from *Rationalism* ; but this is no new difficulty, while it shows the strength of Christianity, and being only destructive, can never take its place.

(C.) CONCLUSION.

The history of Christianity, which seems to have been foreknown to its Founder, affords a strong argument in its favour.

THE argument we have next to consider is that derived from the *History of Christianity*. This religion, it must be remembered, originated, spread over, and finally conquered the civilised world in an historical age. And since the fact of this conquest can neither be disputed nor ignored, it must be accounted for. How is it that an obscure Jewish Peasant, who was

crucified as a malefactor, some nineteen centuries ago, should now be worshipped, by over three hundred million persons, including all the most civilised nations of the world? As a mere historical problem, this requires some solution, for an effect in History, as elsewhere, must have an adequate cause. And it is scarcely too much to say that this is the most remarkable effect in the history of mankind. Here, then, is the subject we have to discuss; and we will first consider the early triumphs of Christianity, and then its subsequent history.

(A.) ITS EARLY TRIUMPHS.

Now it seems hard to exaggerate either the enormous difficulties the Religion had to overcome, or its marvellous success in overcoming them.

(1.) *Its enormous difficulties.*

In the first place, we must consider the immense difficulties of founding such a religion as Christianity. Our familiarity with the subject prevents us from fully realising this, so perhaps an analogy will help to make it clear. Suppose, then, that missionaries *now* appeared in the cities of Europe, in London and Edinburgh, for example, and preached that an obscure peasant, who had been put to death somewhere in Persia as a malefactor, had risen from the dead, and was the God of heaven and earth. What chance would they have of making a single convert? And yet the enterprise of first preaching Christianity at Rome or Athens must have been very similar to this, only far more dangerous. Indeed, it is hard to over-estimate the difficulties of founding a religion whose principal doctrine was that

of a crucified Saviour. And be it remembered, this doctrine was never shirked by the early Christians ; St. Paul preached it boldly, though admitting that it was a *stumbling-block* to the Jews and *foolishness* to the Gentiles.¹ And all this took place among highly civilised nations, and in a literary, one might almost say a rationalistic, age ; when the old pagan religions were being abandoned, because men could no longer believe in them. What, then, must have been the difficulty of introducing a new Religion, which was (apparently) more absurd than any of them, and worshipped One Who had been crucified ?

Moreover, Christianity had many other difficulties to contend with. It was *anti-Jewish* in its comprehensiveness, for it abolished all their religious rights and privileges, and proclaimed that the despised Gentiles were henceforth to be their equals. It was *anti-Pagan* in its absolute claims ; for it was a religion which could stand no rival, and its success meant the destruction of every heathen altar, the execration of every heathen god. And it could be easily represented as *anti-Roman* ; for one of the charges brought against its Founder was that of disloyalty to Cæsar, and a similar charge was made against its preachers at Thessalonica.

Lastly, it had as great difficulties to contend with from a moral point of view. For Christianity was a religion of self-denial and self-sacrifice, and such a religion does not naturally commend itself to mankind. Moreover, this aspect of the Religion was always brought prominently forward by its preachers. A

¹ 1 Cor. 1. 23.

forsaking of sin was its moral requisite, just as a belief in Christ's *atonement* for sin was its mental requisite ; and the difficulty of either alone might well have seemed insuperable.

(2.) *Its marvellous success.*

And yet, in spite of every difficulty, Christianity prevailed. The new religion spread with great rapidity. This we learn not only from Christian writers, who might be thought to exaggerate, but from impartial men such as Suetonius, Tacitus, and the younger Pliny. The former says that in the reign of Claudius (A.D. 41–54) the Jews in Rome, *stirred up by one Chrestus* (i.e., Christian Jews), were so numerous that the Emperor thought it expedient to banish them ; Tacitus says that at the time of the great fire (A.D. 64) a *vast multitude* of Christians were discovered at Rome ; while Pliny, one of the Roman governors in Asia Minor, complained to the Emperor Trajan that the Christians were so numerous that the temples had long been deserted, though at the time he wrote (A.D. 105) they were being frequented again. And he also bears witness to the exemplary lives of the Christians, who he says included men *of every rank*, in life, their invincible fidelity to their religion, and the divine worship they paid to Christ. And as the religion did not originate in either Rome or Asia Minor, Christians were presumably as numerous elsewhere.

Nor can it be said that they were only to be found among the poor and ignorant ; for not only have we the testimony of Pliny just alluded to, but the undisputed Epistles of St. Paul, such as that to the Romans,

show (as pointed out in Chapter XVII.) that he thought his readers well educated, and quite able to follow a difficult argument.

And even the passage that *not many mighty, not many noble*, were Christians,¹ which is often quoted in an opposite sense, really supports this view ; for it implies that though not *many*, there were certainly *some*, to whom these terms might be applied. While elsewhere we have the names of some eminent converts, such as Erastus the chamberlain of the city at Corinth, Dionysius the Areopagite at Athens, and Theophilus a man of high rank (as is shown by the title *Most excellent*) ; none of whom are likely to have accepted Christianity without strong evidence.²

Now what was the cause of this wonderful progress ? It is easy to say what was *not* its cause. Physical force and the authority of the Government had nothing to do with it. Its missionaries did not preach sword in hand, nor were they backed up by the civil power. All they did, all they could do, was to appeal to man's reason and conscience, and this appeal was successful. And we learn from the Christians themselves, *e.g.*, in the Acts, that there were two main reasons for this. The first was the confident appeal to the facts of Christianity, such as the Resurrection of Christ, as undisputed and indisputable ; and the second was the occasional aid of miracles. And the more we reflect on the subject, the more difficult it is to account for it without at least one of these causes. For the spread of Christianity was not like that of a mere philosophy, or

¹ 1 Cor. 1. 26.

² Rom. 16. 23 ; Acts 17. 34 ; 1. 1 ; 23. 26 ; 24. 3.

system of ethics, or scientific theory. It depended entirely on certain alleged *matters of fact*, which facts were quite recent at the time of its origin, occurred at the very place where it was first preached, and were open to the hostile criticism of an entire nation. This, it is needless to add, is without a parallel in history.

But it is said, notwithstanding this rapid progress at first, Christianity took nearly three centuries to conquer the civilised world. Undoubtedly it did, but the significance of the conquest is not diminished by this. It is rather increased when we remember that at intervals all through this period the Church suffered the fiercest persecution. That it should have survived such a fearfully prolonged struggle, and have finally conquered, does but show its inherent strength. We may look in vain for any analogy to this in the rest of history. No other religion has ever withstood such persistent attacks ; no other religion has ever obtained such a complete and almost incredible triumph, the Emperor of the civilised world being brought to worship One Who had been crucified as a malefactor. In short, the progress of Christianity was as unique as its origin, and can only be satisfactorily accounted for by its truth.

(3.) *The so-called natural causes of success.*

We must next glance at some natural causes which have been alleged as accounting for the wonderful spread of Christianity. Those brought forward by Gibbon in his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (Chapter XV.) are five in number ; and he seems to think that when combined, they will account for the

spread of Christianity. But, in the first place, how are we to account for their *combination* ? They are of the most varied character, and even assuming for the moment that they had the result claimed for them, the fact that such various causes should all unite at the same time to favour Christianity seems a coincidence far too remarkable to be accidental. Moreover, when we examine them in detail, it will be found that they one and all imply the truth of the religion.

The five causes are, first, the *intense zeal* of the early Christians. And doubtless this was a most important element in spreading their religion. But what gave them this intense zeal ? What was it that made them so fearfully in earnest about their new religion, that they broke from all earthly ties and faced a life of suffering, and a death of martyrdom in preaching it ? There can be but one answer to this question. It was because they were so absolutely convinced of its truth. It was vouched for by what they considered overwhelming evidence, so they willingly risked everything for it. Their zeal, then, is but evidence for their conviction, and their conviction is but evidence for the truth of what they were convinced of ; and valuable evidence, too, for they plainly had much better means of knowing about it than we can possibly have.

Secondly, we have the doctrine of a *future life*, with rewards and punishments. And doubtless this also had much to do with the success of Christianity. A longing for immortality seems inherent in man, and the vague guesses of heathen philosophers were quite unable to satisfy this. It *might* be true that men

should rise again, but that was all they could say. Christianity alone, resting on the actual fact of Christ's Resurrection, said it *was* true ; so here men found the assurance they wanted. But is it likely that Christianity should have so thoroughly satisfied them in this respect had there been any real doubt as to Christ's Resurrection ?

Thirdly, come the *miracles* ascribed to the early Christians. Gibbon's argument here is more difficult to follow. If these miracles were actually true, of course they would have greatly assisted the new religion ; but then they would have been, not a natural but a supernatural cause of success. If on the other hand, the miracles were false, it is hard to see how the early Christians could have helped their religion by claiming miraculous powers which they did not possess, and which their contemporaries must have known they did not possess.

Fourthly, we have the *pure morality* taught and practised by the early Christians. And this had, of course, much to do with helping their religion. But again we must ask, what was it that enabled the Christians alone in that age of vice and wickedness to lead pure lives ? They ascribed it themselves to the example and power of their Founder, and nothing else can really account for it. Christian morality cannot be a stream without a source, and no other source can be assigned to it. But could a mere human teacher have had this more than human influence over thousands of converts, most of whom had never seen him ?

Lastly, comes the *union* and *discipline* of the early

Church. This may have helped Christianity in the later stages of the struggle, but could obviously have been of little use at the commencement. Moreover, why should Christians of various nations and classes have been so thoroughly united in this one matter unless they were convinced of its overwhelming importance? On the whole, then, these so-called natural causes are only secondary causes in the strict sense of the term. The *truth of the religion* is what they all imply, and this is the real cause which alone can account for its success.

A better way of explaining the spread of Christianity, though still inadequate, is now often adopted; which is by saying that it arose *at a favourable crisis*. The dispersion of the Jews throughout the known world would, it is urged, have facilitated the spread of a religion founded by Jews. The speculations of the Greeks as to a Divine Word, or Logos, would have prevented the doctrines of the Trinity, and the Incarnation, from forming any great difficulty to the learned classes. While the mass of the people were disgusted with the old mythologies of Greece and Rome. These were dying out, because they failed to satisfy human nature, and men were longing for something better. They wanted, as men always will want, a religion; but they wanted it free from the absurdities and immoralities of Pagan worship. Christianity then appeared, and as it was found by many to meet the demand, it naturally succeeded.

But in answer to this it must be remembered that Christianity was not a philosophy founded at Rome or

Athens, in which case it might perhaps be said that the demand caused the supply ; but it arose as a small Jewish sect, basing its doctrines on the actual life of its Founder. While the fierce persecutions it had to endure show that it did not obviously meet the requirements of the day, even apart from the tremendous difficulties involved in the worship of the Crucified.

But now suppose, for the sake of argument, that this had been otherwise, and that the world was so suited to receive Christianity as to account for its rapid spread ; would the inference be against its Divine origin ? Certainly not ; for the agreement in this case would be far too close to be accidental. It would show *design*, and precisely such design as we should expect if the Religion were true. Anyone who believes in the Divine government of the world would naturally expect the true Religion to be introduced at a suitable time ; and thus the correspondence would merely show that the God Who rules in history is also the God Who introduced Christianity. So here again the proposed explanation, even if admitted, does but imply the truth of the Religion.

(4.) *Contrast with Mahometanism.* “

And this conclusion is rendered still stronger when we contrast the spread of Christianity with that of Mahometanism. For here we have the one example history affords of the spread of a religion which can be compared with that of Christianity. And yet the contrast between the two is very marked, whether we consider their method of progress or their alleged evidence of truthfulness.

And first as to the method of progress. For thirteen years Mahomet appealed to man's reason alone, and made remarkably few converts. After this failure of peaceful means he appealed to *force*, and from this time his religion spread rapidly. But its progress has no analogy whatever to that of Christianity, as the means employed were just the opposite. In the one case, all we have to account for is that Mahomet should be able to collect an army, that that army should conquer, and that the conquered should adopt the religion of their conquerors, about which they were often given no option. Conquest and conversion went together, and there is scarcely an instance in history of a nation embracing the Mahometan religion, without being first conquered by a Mahometan army. And as Mahomet appealed at times to the lower passions of men, allowing, for instance, himself and his followers several wives, his success is not very surprising. In the spread of Christianity, on the other hand, no force whatever was employed, and, as we have seen, it had enormous difficulties to contend with. The contrast, then, between the two is just what we should expect between the natural and the supernatural spread of a religion, the one advancing by worldly power, the other in spite of it.

But an even greater contrast has still to be noticed, which is that Mahomet did not appeal to *evidential miracles* in support of his claims—that is, to outward matters of fact capable of being judged of by other people. And this is the more remarkable since he refers to the miracles of previous prophets, including

those of Christ, as authentic,¹ but never pretends to have worked any himself. The obvious conclusion is that he felt, as all men must feel, the overwhelming difficulty of asserting public miracles if none occurred, and he therefore appealed to force, because he had nothing else to appeal to. And yet that the first preachers of Christianity asserted such miracles is, as we have seen, undeniable. They were not advocates of a creed, but witnesses for certain facts, such as the Resurrection and other miracles, which they believed they actually saw. There is nothing corresponding to this in regard to Mahometanism or any other religion. It may still be said that Mahometanism shows that a religion can make rapid progress without miracles. Of course it does ; and so does Buddhism, which also spread rapidly. But it does not show that a religion which, like Christianity, claims to rest on miracles can make its way if those miracles are false.

(B.) ITS SUBSEQUENT HISTORY.

We pass on now from the early triumphs of Christianity to its subsequent history, and will consider in turn its past vitality, its present effect, and its future prospects.

(I.) *Its vitality in the past.*

To begin with, a strong argument in its favour is its vitality. It has survived in spite of external assaults and internal schisms, and its spread and continuity can only be satisfactorily accounted for by its truth. This is an argument the force of which increases as time

¹ Koran, Sura. v.

goes on, and fresh difficulties are encountered and overcome. Of course it may be said this is merely a case of survival of the fittest, and only shows that of all early religions Christianity is the one most fitted to survive. But this is only another way of saying that it is the one most adapted to human nature, which, if true, is a strong argument in its favour.

Moreover, the social state of the world has changed immensely, and yet Christianity has always kept in touch with it. It has shown itself suitable for different ages, countries, and social conditions, and, unlike other religions, is still in sympathy with the highest forms of civilisation. In short, Christianity has kept possession of the civilised world for over nineteen centuries, and is as vigorous in its age as in its youth. Its long reign is indeed so familiar to us that there is a danger of missing its importance. Can we imagine a man *now* who should found a religion which well-nigh two thousand years hence should be still flourishing, still aggressive, and still recognising him not only as its founder but its God? And yet this would be but a parallel case to that of Christianity. Amid all the changes in history it alone has remained unchanged. Its doctrines, at least the important ones, contained in the Creeds, have been the same century after century, and its Founder is still worshipped by millions.

(2.) *Its effect at the present.*

In close connection with the history of Christianity comes its effect on the world. A religion which has reigned so long, and over the most civilised nations,

must necessarily have had some influence for good or evil. And with regard to Christianity there can be little doubt as to the answer. The present state of the civilised world is a standing witness to its benefits, since nearly all our moral superiority to the nations of old is due to this religion.

For example, it has entirely altered the position of women, who are no longer looked down upon as they used to be. It has also altered the position of children, who were formerly considered as property, and at the disposal of their parents, infanticide being of course common. Again, it has changed our ideas as to the sick, a hospital being almost entirely a Christian invention. It has also changed our ideas about work. In all the nations of antiquity, and in non-Christian countries of the present day, a workman is looked down upon. Once more, it has created a respect for human life as such, and apart from the position of the individual person, which was unknown in ancient times. In short, our acknowledgment of what are called the *rights of man* is almost entirely due to Christianity. Nor is there anything surprising in this ; for the common Fatherhood of God and the common love of Christ naturally afford the strongest argument for the common rights of man. And though Christianity did not, and could not at first, suppress slavery and war, it greatly mitigated their evils from the beginning, and is slowly destroying them.

These are but samples of the effects of Christianity ; and that they are really such, and are not merely due to civilisation, is shown conclusively by ancient Rome.

Here civilisation was carried to a great height, and literature and the fine arts flourished ; and yet all the time there were the greatest moral vices, not to mention the barbarous treatment of captives and the combats of gladiators. And though, no doubt, various causes have contributed to the improvement of mankind, the teaching of Christ has certainly been the most important. The obvious and public good which Christianity has done is thus indisputable.

Moreover, another, and perhaps the greater, part of its influence is of such a kind as not to appear much in history. Christianity may have promoted the happiness, increased the virtues, and lessened the vices of millions of men in their private lives without history recording it. Nor can it be doubted that it actually has done so from the very commencement. For the undisputed Epistles of St. Paul show that many of his converts were reclaimed from the vilest wickedness.¹

But it may be said, though Christianity has done so much good, has it not also done some *harm* ? What about the religious wars and persecutions in the Middle Ages ? But with regard to the wars, religion was, as a rule, the excuse rather than the cause ; for had Christianity never been heard of, there would doubtless have been numerous wars in the Middle Ages, as in all other ages. With regard to the persecutions, they must, of course, be both admitted and deplored ; but we may ask, what religion except Christianity could have been mixed up with such persecutions, and yet have escaped the odium of mankind ? Christianity

¹ *E.g.*, 1 Cor. 6. 9-11.

has done so, because men have seen that it was not the religion itself, but its false friends who were responsible for the persecutions. The important fact is that the New Testament, unlike the Koran,¹ does not authorise, still less command, the employment of force in gaining converts.

We now turn to another aspect of the subject. Not only has Christianity done much good in the past, but it is doing much good at the present. This also is beyond dispute ; everyone can verify the fact for himself. Thousands of men and women spend their lives in self-sacrifice among the poor and sick solely for the sake of Christ. Of course, it may be said that all this is folly, and that we ought to try and benefit our fellow-men for their own sake, or for the sake of the State. But, whether folly or not, the fact remains. The vast majority of those who visit the poor and sick do not do so for the sake of the State, or even mainly for the sake of the poor themselves, but from avowedly Christian motives. They believe that Christ loves these poor, and therefore they love them too, and willingly spend their lives in trying to help them.

And it is also a fact that this *strange attraction* which Christ exercises over the hearts of men is unique in history. Can we imagine anyone spending his life in visiting the sick in some large town, and saying that he is doing it for the love of David, or of Plato, or of Mahomet ? And yet all through the civilised world thousands are doing it for the love of Christ. And this influence, be it observed, is not like

¹ Koran, Sura. viii. 12 ; ix. 5 ; xlvii. 4.

that of other great men, local and temporary, but world-wide and permanent. Christ is thus not only, as we saw in the last chapter, the *holiest* of men, but the *mightiest* of men also ; the Man in short who has most influenced mankind. And with trifling exceptions, few will dispute that this influence has been wholly for good. So that the belief in the God Incarnate has done more to improve the world, than the belief in the God of Nature, or the God of the Jews, or any other religion past or present. And therefore, judged by its fruits, Christianity is a religion which might very reasonably have had a divine origin.

On the other hand, it must be admitted that though Christianity has done so much good, it has not entirely reformed the world ; and its failure to do this, after trying for so many centuries, is thought by some to be adverse to its claims. But others think that its partial success and partial failure are just what we should expect if it were true. And what is more to the point, this seems to have been expected by its Founder, for He always implied that the good and the evil—the wheat and the tares—were to be mixed together until the end of the world. Moreover, reforming this world is not the sole object of Christianity. Its chief purpose is to prepare men for another world ; and therefore, until we know the condition of its adherents in the future state, we cannot say how far it has been successful. While as to its so-called failure, this has been entirely due to the inconsistency of its adherents. If all men were Christians, and all Christians lived up to the religion they professed, there

would be little to complain of even in this imperfect world.

On the whole, then, the *effect* of Christianity is distinctly in its favour. It has done much good, and will probably do more as time goes on ; though it has not entirely reformed the world, and probably never will. But the good it has done is an actual fact which cannot be disputed, while the counter-argument that it ought to have done more good is at least open to doubt.

(3.) *Its prospects in the future.*

Lastly, the spread of Christianity seems likely to continue, and some day we may expect to see it universally professed in the world, as it is in Western Europe at the present time, though, of course, there will always be individuals who dissent from it. The reasons for this confident hope are, that, speaking broadly, Christian nations alone are extending their influence. If, as is sometimes said, Christianity only rules in three continents out of five (Europe, America, and Australia), it is equally true that the future of the world seems to depend on these continents alone. Japan may, of course, be quoted as an exception, but strange to say Japan seems to be becoming Christian.

And to this must be added the fact that Christian *missions* are now being revived to a large extent, and, though they are not always successful, yet, taken together, they secure a good many converts. Moreover, there is no other side to this argument. It is not that Christianity is being adopted in some countries and renounced in others. The gains, whether great or

small, are all *net profits*. With one exception, there is not a single instance for many centuries of a nation or tribe which once adopted Christianity changing its religion to anything else. And the exception, that of France at the time of the Revolution, strikingly proves the rule ; for the change could not be maintained, and in a few years Christianity reasserted itself throughout the country.

But an important objection has now to be examined. It is said that in Christian countries an increasingly large number of men either openly reject Christianity or give it a mere nominal approval. This may be called the objection from the spread of *Rationalism*, and it is an important one, because it is an attempt to meet Christianity with its own weapons, an appeal to reason. Of course it must be remembered that a great deal of the infidelity of the present day is not caused by reasoning at all, but by the want of it ; and it is hopeless to argue against this. For how can men be convinced of Christianity or anything else if they will not take the trouble to examine its claims ?

But putting aside this class, for whom the present *Essay* is obviously not intended, there are still many men who may fairly be called Rationalists—men, that is, who have studied *both* sides of the subject, and whose reasoning leads them to reject Christianity. They admit that there is evidence in its favour, but they say that it is far from convincing. And it is believed by many that Rationalism is spreading at the present day, and will ultimately become common among thoughtful men. Now, of course, the whole of

this *Essay* is really an attempt to meet this objection, and to show that, when carefully considered, the arguments in favour of Christianity far outweigh those against it. But three additional remarks may be made here.

The first is, that this is no *new* difficulty. Rationalism has existed ever since the Middle Ages, and was most aggressive and most confident in the eighteenth century, as a single quotation will show. Bishop Butler in the preface to his *Analogy of Religion*, 1736, says, 'It has come, I know not how, to be taken for granted, by many persons, that Christianity is not so much as a subject of inquiry, but that it is now at length discovered to be fictitious. And accordingly they treat it as if, in the present age, this were an agreed point among all people of discernment; and nothing remained but to set it up as a principal subject of mirth and ridicule, as it were by way of reprisals for its having so long interrupted the pleasures of the world.' It is now nearly two centuries since these words were written, and Christianity is still flourishing! And therefore, as all previous attacks have proved futile, there is no reason to believe that the present one will be more successful.

Secondly, these continued assaults on Christianity afford in one respect additional evidence in its favour; since they show, as nothing but repeated attacks could show, its *indestructibility*. Had Christianity never been assailed, its strength would never have been apparent; but now we know that, try as men will for centuries, they cannot get rid of this religion.

Lastly, it must be remembered that Rationalism is all destructive and not constructive. It can show many reasons for *not* believing in Christianity, but it can give the world nothing which can in any way take its place. It has no satisfactory solution for the great problems of life. Why does man exist at all? Why has he got free will? What is the meaning of sin? Is there any forgiveness for sin? What is the meaning of death? Is there any life beyond death? Is there a judgment? Can we dare to face it? Shall we recognise those whom we have loved on earth? In short, what is man's destiny here and hereafter? These are the questions which always have interested, and always will interest, mankind. Rationalists may say that the Christian answer to them is incorrect; but they can offer no other which is worth a moment's consideration.

(C.) CONCLUSION.

Before concluding this chapter one other point of some importance has to be noticed. It is that the early history of Christianity, with its continual triumph amidst continual persecution, seems to have been fore-known to its Founder, as well as His own marvellous influence in the world.

These *prophecies* of Christ concerning His own religion are certainly very striking. We find, on the one hand, a most absolute conviction as to the triumph of His Church, and that its enemies would never prevail against it. And on the other, an equally certain conviction as to the constant sufferings of its members, who were to expect life-long persecution and the

universal hatred of mankind.¹ And yet these strange prophecies of continual success amidst continual suffering were for three centuries as strangely fulfilled.

Moreover, Christ's assertions regarding His own influence in the world are equally remarkable. We will give but two examples.² He said, *And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Myself.* He was lifted up on the cross, and, however strange we may think it, millions of men have in consequence been drawn to Him with passionate devotion. Again, He said, *I am the light of the world.* And now, after eighteen centuries, both friends and foes admit that His is the teaching which has illuminated and regenerated mankind. Had He been a mere Jewish peasant, the utterance of such prophecies as these seems almost as incredible as their fulfilment. But what shall we say when they were both uttered *and* fulfilled? Have we not here an argument in favour of Christianity, the strength of which it is hard to estimate? Nor can we get out of the difficulty by denying the authenticity of the passages; for they would be quite as remarkable if invented by an evangelist as if uttered by Christ Himself.

We may now sum up this chapter on the *History of Christianity*. We have considered its early triumphs, and its subsequent history; and each of these is, strictly speaking, unique, and each is inexplicable on purely natural grounds. But undoubtedly the more important is the marvellous success of Christianity at first, in spite of the great difficulties it had to encounter;

¹ *E.g.*, Matt. 10. 17, 22; 16. 18.

² John 8. 12; 12. 32.

and, as we have seen, all natural explanations of *this* fail hopelessly.

The historical argument, then, leads us back to *miracles*; for every other explanation of the first-triumph of Christianity is found to be inadequate. While, on the other hand, the establishment of the Christian religion is precisely such an event as we should expect if the miracles were true. And it need hardly be added that true miracles, not false ones, are required to bear such a superstructure. The most holy and the most powerful religion the world has ever seen cannot have been founded on falsehood or fable. In other words, if we deny that the Christian miracles occurred, and take from Christ all that is superhuman, we cannot imagine Him as the Founder of Christianity. There would be an obvious disproportion between cause and effect. While, as a matter of fact, it was *not* a natural Christ, but a supernatural Christ—the *Christ of the Gospels*—who won the heart of mankind, and conquered the world. We seem thus forced to the conclusion that the only thing which can account for the history of Christianity is its *truth*. Anyhow, it is plain that its *history* affords a strong additional argument in its favour.

CHAPTER XXII.

THAT ON THE WHOLE THE OTHER EVIDENCE SUPPORTS THIS CONCLUSION.

Miscellaneous arguments for and against Christianity.

(A.) CHRISTIANITY AND THE BIBLE.

The existence of slight errors in the Bible cannot be disputed, but they are quite unimportant, since the writers make no claim to Verbal Inspiration.

(B.) CHRISTIANITY AND PRAYER.

Its universality. There are, however, three objections. It is said to be—

- (1.) Scientifically incredible, as inconsistent with the uniformity of nature.
- (2.) Morally wrong, as impugning the power, wisdom, and goodness of God.
- (3.) Practically useless, as shown by statistics ; but none of these can be maintained.

(C.) CHRISTIANITY AND HUMAN NATURE.

It is adapted to human nature ; for it meets to a great extent the inherent cravings of mankind, especially in regard to sorrow and sin, death and eternity. The objection as to selfishness.

(D.) CHRISTIANITY AND OTHER RELIGIONS.

Their comparative study ; the Krishna myth ; the Horus myth ; the uniqueness of Christianity. The objection that religion depends on race and climate.

WE propose in this chapter to consider some of the remaining arguments for and against Christianity.

Fortunately, there are only four of anything like sufficient importance to appreciably affect the general conclusion. These arise from the relation of Christianity to the Bible, to prayer, to human nature, and to other religions ; and we will examine each in turn.

(A.) CHRISTIANITY AND THE BIBLE.

Now it is only natural that a collection of books like the Bible, treating of such a variety of subjects, and scattered through so many centuries, should be liable to much criticism on the one hand, and have much to be said in its favour on the other. A good deal of the evidence in its favour we have already considered, and also several arguments against it. But there is still one important and very common objection to be discussed. It is that several slight mistakes and discrepancies exist in the Bible (which we have already admitted in Chapters X. and XV.) ; and yet it is essential for the Christian religion that the whole Book should be strictly true, since its authors were *verbally inspired*. But this latter point is disputed.

To prevent confusion, we must carefully distinguish between *Revelation* and *Inspiration*. By the former is meant, as said in Chapter VI., any superhuman knowledge directly imparted by God to man ; and by the latter, any superhuman guidance vouchsafed to man in recording this or anything else. And if such guidance extends to the very words used, thus securing the writer against any mistake, however trivial, it is called *verbal* inspiration. Is, then, such inspiration in any way essential to Christianity ? Certainly not ; for the Three Creeds do not say a word about inspira-

tion from beginning to end, and even the writers of the Bible themselves, though of course they claim divine authority for their *revelations* and for their *religious teaching*, do not claim to be verbally inspired.

Some texts, it is true, seem to imply this at first sight, but none of them are really conclusive. Perhaps the strongest is where St. Paul says that he speaks 'not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth.'¹ And even here the inference is doubtful; for in the previous chapter we find the *word of the cross*, meaning the doctrine or teaching of the cross, not the actual noun; while just before St. Paul admits that he is making a mistake, as he afterwards corrects it; and in another chapter he distinctly says that he is speaking 'not after the Lord, but as in foolishness.' And though this latter passage implies inspiration of some kind elsewhere, it need not be verbal inspiration, nor need it extend to secular subjects.

We conclude, then, that slight historical or other errors in the Bible are no valid argument against Christianity. The Book, like many others, may be substantially true, without being infallible. It is not, of course, meant that the Bible is not inspired at all. The Church has always believed it to be so, and there are strong reasons for this belief. But the question is one for Christians only, it does not concern unbelievers in Christianity, and is not essential to the religion or to its proofs. If the Bible is as trustworthy a record

¹ 1 Cor. 2. 13; 1. 18, 14-16; 2 Cor. 11. 17; see also Matt. 10. 19; John 14. 26; Gal. 3. 16; Heb. 1. 5-12; 3. 7; 2 Tim. 3. 16; 2 Pet. 1. 21.

of the facts it relates as any ordinary History of England, that is sufficient, indeed far more than sufficient, to prove Christianity without any inspiration at all.

(B.) CHRISTIANITY AND PRAYER.

We next come to the subject of Prayer. Now the Christian, in common with most other religions, asserts the value of prayer not only for obtaining what are called spiritual blessings, but also, as a means of influencing natural events. And yet prayer with such an object is said by many to be scientifically *incredible*, morally *wrong*, and practically *useless*. So we will first glance at the universality of the custom, and then consider these objections in turn.

Now, prayer of some kind is, and always has been, the universal rule in almost every religion. It is practically co-extensive with the human race. No one can point to its inventor, no one can point to a time when men did not pray. Missionaries have not to teach savages to pray, but merely to *Whom* to pray. In short, prayer of some kind seems universal, just as man's moral sense of right and wrong is universal, though of course each is capable of being trained and perfected. And its intrinsic vitality is such that it has everywhere stood its ground for thousands of years. Nor is it in any way like an animal's cry of pain when hurt, which, though universal, means nothing; for this of course resembles a man's cry of pain, and has no connection with prayer whatever.

If, then, prayer is a delusion, it is a very remarkable one, especially as in most ancient religions prayer was

made to false gods who could not answer it ; and yet in spite of every failure, the belief in prayer has always remained. Men have always preferred to think that the failure was due to their own unworthiness, rather than give up the belief in a God Who answers prayer. And this *universality* of the custom is alone a strong argument in its favour ; for it seems most unlikely that God should have implanted in mankind a universal habit of asking if He never intended to answer. We pass on now to the objections.

(I.) *Scientific objection.*

In the first place, it is said that answers to prayer are scientifically *incredible*, since they would involve God's interfering with the course of nature, or, in popular language, working miracles. The most probable explanation is, that they are only a particular class of *superhuman coincidences* (see Chapter VII.). According to this theory, God, knowing beforehand that the prayer would be offered, arranged beforehand to answer it. Thus the prayer was not a direct cause of the event which fulfilled it, but it might still have been an indirect cause. For had the man not prayed, God, foreknowing this, might have arranged for the corresponding event not to have happened. Of course, at the time when the prayer was offered, the event might have been, and probably was, a natural consequence of previous events, and so could not have been avoided except by some special action on God's part. Yet, as just shown, the prayer might still have been indirectly the cause of its own fulfilment.

And the same argument applies even to the most

extreme case, when the prayer is made *after the event*. Suppose, for instance, a man heard of the loss of a ship in which his son was travelling, and prayed for his safety. That safety, as far as the shipwreck was concerned, must have been decided before the father prayed. But yet, as everything was foreknown to God, his subsequent prayer might not have been useless ; since, if God had not known that the father would have prayed, He might not have brought about the son's safety.

Of course, it may be said that this is making the cause come after the effect, and is therefore absurd. No doubt it would be so if merely physical forces were involved ; but when we are dealing with personal beings, able to foresee and to act accordingly, there is nothing impossible in a cause happening after what was in a certain sense its effect. For instance, my going for a holiday next week may be the cause of my working hard this week ; though, strictly speaking, it is my foreknowledge of the intended holiday, and some action I took in consequence, that produced the effect. So in the case before us. Strictly speaking, it is God's *foreknowledge* that the prayer would be offered, and some action He took in consequence, which produced the effect ; but for all practical purposes this is the same as if the prayer produced it. And therefore this theory does not detract from the value and importance of prayer any more than God's foreknowledge in other respects makes human conduct of no importance. In every case God foreknows the result, not in spite of, but because He also foreknows, the man's conduct on which

it depends. And of course if we admit what is called God's *Immanence* in nature, and that everything that occurs is due to the present and immediate action of His Will (Chapter VII.), it greatly lessens any remaining difficulty there may be in regard to prayer.

From this it is plain that answers to prayer may, without losing their significance, be regarded as super-human coincidences ; and, if so, they do not involve any interference with the ordinary course of nature, and all scientific difficulties are at an end.

(2.) *Moral objection.*

Next as to the moral difficulties. Prayer, it is said, is morally *wrong*, since it impugns each of the three great attributes of God. It impugns His *Power*, by implying that He is partially under the control of men ; His *Wisdom*, by implying that He has to be informed of what we want ; and His *Goodness*, by implying that He cannot be trusted to act for the best without our interference.

And first, as to God's *Power*. No one who prays supposes that God is under the control of his prayers, but merely that He may freely choose to be influenced by them. Insignificant as man is in comparison with his Maker, we have already shown that God takes an interest in his welfare. And admitting this, there is nothing improbable in His being influenced by a man's prayer. Nor is this in any way trying to persuade Him to change His Will, since everything was foreknown to God ; and therefore the prayer, with all it involved, may have been part of His Will from all eternity.

Secondly, as to God's *Wisdom*. No one who prays supposes that prayer is for the information of God, or for arousing His sympathy, but merely that it is the way which He has Himself chosen for us to show our trust in Him. Nor is there anything unlikely in this ; for God is a Personal Being possessing Free Will, and therefore an appeal to this Free Will cannot be thought unfitting. It shows our belief in His Personality, and is a strong help to us in trying to realise it.

Thirdly, as to God's *Goodness*. As a matter of fact, God does not wait for us to pray to send most of His blessings. The vast majority of them come without our co-operation, but a few of them are said to be conditional on our praying. And this is quite consistent with perfect goodness. Human analogy seems decisive on the point. A father may know what his child wants, may be quite willing to supply that want, and may yet choose to wait till the child asks him. And why ? Simply because supplying his wants is not the whole object the father has in view. He also wishes to train the child's character ; to teach him to rely upon and trust his father, and to develop his confidence and gratitude. And all this would be obviously unattainable if the father supplied his wants as a machine would do ; in which case the child might perhaps forget that his father was not a machine.

Now, for all we know, precisely the same may be the case with regard to prayer. God may wish not only to supply man's wants, but also to train and develop his character. Indeed, as shown in Chapter V.,

the existence of evil seems to force us to this very conclusion. And if so, it is out of the question to say that His not bestowing some blessings till they are asked for is incompatible with perfect goodness. It may be, and probably is, a very sign of that goodness. For, as already said, God's goodness does not consist of simple beneficence, but also of righteousness. And, as a general rule, it certainly seems right that those who believe in God and take the trouble to ask for His blessings should be the ones to receive them. The objection, then, that prayer is morally wrong cannot be maintained from any point of view.

It is, however, only fair to add that a certain class of prayers would be wrong. We have no right to pray for *miracles*, e.g., for water to run uphill, or for a dead man to come to life again ; though we have a right to pray for any ordinary event, such as rain or recovery from sickness. The reason for this distinction is obvious. A miracle is, in popular language, something contrary to the order of nature ; and as the order of nature is merely the Will of Him who ordered nature, it would be contrary to God's Will. And we cannot ask God to act contrary to what we believe to be His Will.

Of course it may be said that to pray for rain when otherwise it would not have rained really involves a miracle, for it is asking God to interfere with the ordinary course of nature. But here everything depends on the saving clause *when otherwise it would not have rained*. If we knew this for certain, it would be wrong to pray for rain : not knowing it for certain,

it is not wrong. And as we do know for certain that water will not run uphill without a miracle, it is always wrong to pray for that. In the same way we may pray for fruitful crops, because it is plainly God's Will that mankind should be nourished ; but we may not pray to be able to live without food, since this is plainly not God's Will. Of course, in the Bible, miracles were sometimes prayed for, but only by persons who acted under Divine guidance ; and this affords no argument for our doing so.

(3.) *Practical Objection.*

Lastly, it is said, even admitting that prayers might be answered, yet we have abundant evidence that they never are ; so that prayer at the present day is *useless*. But there are some obvious difficulties here ; for no one asserts that *all* prayers are answered. Various conditions have to be fulfilled, many of which apply equally to prayers to an earthly ruler. For instance, a person must not only believe in God, but also in His power and willingness to answer prayers ; and the answer must be of such a kind that he may legitimately pray for it. Moreover, he must be trying to lead such a life as God wishes him to lead, and also be honestly exerting himself to gain the required end ; for prayer cannot be looked upon as a substitute for work.

And this prevents our deciding the question by *experiment*, as is sometimes urged. Why not, it is said, settle the question once for all by a test case ? But this is impossible, since in the vast majority of cases we cannot say whether the above conditions are

fulfilled or not ; and even if we could, it would still be impracticable. For prayer is the earnest entreaty that God would grant something we earnestly desire ; and if used as an experiment, it ceases to be genuine prayer altogether. And even an earthly ruler would have too much self-respect to answer prayers made in such a spirit.

But it is further urged that though we cannot decide by experiment, we can by *observation*. But the facts adduced can be explained on either theory. Suppose, for instance, an epidemic breaks out, and prayer is at once made that it may cease ; but instead of ceasing, it continues for a week, and kills a hundred persons. How do we know that but for the prayers it might not have continued for a month, and killed a thousand persons ? And the same argument applies in other cases.

Against these various objections must be weighed the fact that an immense number of men of many ages and countries, and of undoubted intelligence and integrity, have asserted that their prayers have been answered ; and the cumulative value of this evidence is very great. While of course, to those who possess it, the conviction that certain events happened, not accidentally, as we should say, but in answer to some prayer, is absolutely convincing. It resembles in this respect the conviction that a man's acts are determined by his free will, and not of necessity.

Having now decided that there is nothing *incredible* in prayers being answered, that they are not *wrong*, while many of those who ought to know best assert

that they are not *useless*, it is plain that no argument against the Christian religion can be sustained on this subject. And that is the question we are considering. We are not appealing to answers to prayer as having any evidential value, which in the vast majority of cases they have not, but merely showing that, according to both science and experience, the subject is an open one.

(C.) CHRISTIANITY AND HUMAN NATURE.

The next subject we have to consider is a very important one, the *adaptation* of Christianity to human nature. To begin with, it is undeniable that Christianity appeals very strongly to some at least among every class of men. The poor value it as much as the rich, and the ignorant as much as the learned ; children can partly understand it, and philosophers can do no more. And this is not only the case at the present time, but it has been so among all the changing conditions of society for eighteen centuries.

Now, when we inquire into the reason of this powerful hold which Christianity has on so many men, we find it is because it meets certain inherent cravings in human nature. Some of these, such as man's belief in prayer, and his sense of responsibility, are of course satisfied by any form of Theism. So also is his idea of justice, which requires virtue and vice to be suitably rewarded hereafter, since they are not here. But man's nature has many other cravings besides these ; and yet Christianity seems to satisfy it everywhere.

In the first place, it assures us of what we all wish to know, that God takes an interest in us men. This

is of course a truth of Natural Religion, but it is a truth which the progress of science, especially astronomy, makes it increasingly difficult to believe. There are, as we have seen, several considerations which lessen the difficulty (Chap. V.), but Christianity, if once accepted, removes it altogether. For if the Ruler of the Universe chose to become incarnate on this planet, then all thought of our insignificance is at an end. And when we contemplate the distant stars, we are overwhelmed with a sense not of the littleness of man, but of the greatness of the love of God, Who for our sakes was pleased to become Man Himself.

And this also justifies us in regarding God as *our Father in heaven*, Who cares for us, and watches over us as an earthly father would do. Such a view of the Deity may be called anthropomorphic, but it is the only one that satisfies human nature. And Christianity gives us the longed-for assurance that however inadequate it may be, it cannot be wrong, since it is the way in which God Himself wishes us to regard Him.

We will now consider four points in detail and select *Sorrow* and *Sin*, *Death* and *Eternity*. The three first, and possibly the fourth, all have to be faced; they are the common heritage of all mankind. And while Rationalism does not help us to face any of them, and mere Theism leaves much in uncertainty, Christianity meets the needs of mankind throughout, or at all events far better than any other religion.

And first, as to *Sorrow*. It is indisputable that in this life man has to bear a great deal of sorrow and

suffering ; and it is also indisputable that when in sorrow he instinctively longs for someone who can both sympathise with him and help him. An impersonal God can of course, do neither ; indeed we might as well go for comfort to the force of gravity. And though a personal God can help us, we do not feel sure that He can sympathise with us. On the other hand, fellow-men can sympathise, but they cannot always help. In Christ alone we have a Being Who seems to entirely satisfy human nature ; for being Man, He can sympathise with all human sorrow, and being God, He can alleviate it. So here Christianity supplies a universal want. Of course, the doctrine of the *Incarnation* also satisfies mankind in other respects, especially in presenting him with a worthy Object for his affections, and with a perfect Example ; but these points have been already touched upon in Chapter XIII.

And next, as to *Sin*. Here again the facts are practically undisputed. Man's sense of sin is universal, so also is his belief in the justice of God ; and therefore in all ages man has longed for some means of propitiating the Deity. The widespread custom of sacrifice is a conclusive proof of this. It shows both man's inherent sense of guilt and also his inherent sense of the need of expiation. And yet, wherever Christianity has been accepted, such sacrifices have been abandoned. It is scarcely necessary to point out the reason for this. The Christian doctrine of the *Atonement* entirely satisfies these cravings of mankind. It admits the fact of sin ; it provides a sufficient Sacrifice for sin, which man could never provide of himself, and it thus assures

him of complete forgiveness. And yet, as shown in Chapter XIII., it does all this without in any way minimising the guilt of sin, or allowing man to sin on with impunity, but rather by magnifying it to an extent which no other religion has done, since it shows that it required an Infinite Sacrifice, that of God Himself, to ensure its forgiveness. Moreover, Christianity shows that sin is not a necessity in human nature ; for it alone of all religions can point to One Who, though tempted as we are, was yet without sin. And Christians assert, and they surely ought to know best, that this example of Christ is a strong help in enabling them to resist sin.

Next, as to *Death*. Here again the facts are undisputed. Few persons like to contemplate their own death, while some even shrink from it in horror, and yet it is the one event to which we may look forward with certainty. But is there a life after death ? Most men long for it, and most religions have tried to satisfy this longing in one way or another, but only with partial success. The higher nature of man revolts against any mere material or sensual heaven such as Mahomet imagined, a sort of continuation of the so-called pleasures of this life without its pains. On the other hand, a purely spiritual heaven does not satisfy mankind either ; for a man longs to know that he will be able to recognise again those whom he has loved on earth. This is indeed one of our deepest, strongest, and most universal longings (who is there that has not felt it ?), and yet there must always be some doubt as to recognising a disembodied spirit. And here again

the Christian doctrine of the *Resurrection of the Body* alone satisfies the cravings of mankind ; for all doubt is now at an end. The risen body will define and localise man's spirit then, just as the natural body does now ; and though there will be a great change, it will not prevent recognition. Even the Apostles, though unprepared for it, and though themselves unaware of what a risen body was like, were soon able to recognise Christ after His Resurrection.

There is, of course, the well-known difficulty as to the period of life of the risen body. A man, it is said, would only be recognised by his grandfather, if he remained a child ; and by his grandson, if he were an old man. But the difficulty is not so great as it seems ; for in this life a man who has not seen his son, since he was a child, may not be able to recognise him in later years, in the sense of knowing him at sight. But he may be immensely pleased to meet him again, and live near him, especially if in the meanwhile the son had done well, and been a credit to his father. Moreover, the risen body will show us, for the first time, what the man really is, when all the accidental surroundings with which he is now associated, such as wealth or poverty, have been removed, and his character is at length perfected. And perhaps we shall then see that the various states in which he has lived here, as child, boy, or man, were only imperfect approximations to this, and that all that is good in any of them—the affection of childhood, the activity of boyhood, and the mature judgment of manhood—will be combined in the risen body.

And though it is somewhat tantalising not to know more about the future life, very possibly the reason why we are not told more is that we should be unable to understand it if we were. Even in this world it is doubtful if a savage or a young child could understand the intellectual life of a civilised man, however carefully it might be explained to him ; and practically certain that an ape could not. And for all we know our own future life may be as much beyond our present understanding. It is the *Great Surprise* in store for us all. But however much we may be changed, our personal identity will still remain, *I shall be I, and you will be you*, with much the same characters as we have now. This is the important point, and of this we may be quite certain.

And lastly, as to *Eternity*. Christianity, it is true, can say little here, but that little is full of hope. It opens up boundless possibilities, far more than any other form of Theism. For by the Incarnation human nature has been united to the Divine, and thus raised to a position second only to that of God Himself. No destiny, then, that can be imagined is too great for man. Created or evolved (it matters not which) in the image of the Triune God, with a supernatural freedom of choice, his nature united to God's by the Incarnation, his sins forgiven through the Atonement, his body purified and spiritualised at its Resurrection—surely the end of all this cannot be any mere monotonous existence, but rather one of ceaseless joy and activity. 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard' what those joys are, but doubtless they will be as far above anything we

can imagine as the life of a butterfly is above the imagination of a chrysalis.

Now the conclusion to be drawn from all this is quite plain. Christianity is so adapted to man's nature that it probably came from the Author of man's nature ; just as if a complicated key fits a complicated lock, it was probably made by the locksmith. Or, to put the same conclusion in other words, Christ satisfies the whole nature of man because He is its Creator. And considering that Christianity claims to be meant for all mankind, and that the vast majority of men have neither time nor ability to investigate its proofs, the fact of its thus appealing direct to human nature is certainly a strong argument in its favour ; though, like all arguments which depend on a man's own feelings, it is not well suited for controversy. Suffice it to say, that many men, who are quite able to appreciate the force of *other* arguments in favour of Christianity, such as we have examined in this Essay, yet assert that to them this is an even stronger proof.

But we must now consider an objection. It is, that Christianity is really a *selfish* religion, looking only for future rewards, and teaching men to follow virtue, not for virtue's sake, but solely with a view to their own advantage here or hereafter. But this is an entire mistake, though a very common one. The Christian's motive, in trying to lead such a life as God wishes him to lead, is simply *love*. He has, as already said, an overwhelming sense of God's love to him. And though, doubtless, leading a good life will bring with it some future reward, yet this is not the true

motive for leading it. Compare the case of a young child trying to please his parents simply because he loves them. It would be unjust to call this selfishness, though it may be quite true that the parents would do much for the child later on in life, which they would not have done had the child never shown them any affection.

Or again to take another example, if a young man puts aside a certain amount of his earnings for his old age, when he will be unable to work, though he may do this expressly for his own benefit, it is scarcely selfishness. It would be better described as thrift, and is worthy of all praise. So again, for a man to strive to subdue his evil passions is certainly not selfishness, though it is equally certain that it will be to his own advantage. *Selfishness* is having regard to one's own advantage at the expense of that of other people. But any idea of this kind is quite inapplicable to a Christian's striving after his own salvation. The *Great Ambition*, as it is called, is one which all may entertain, all may work for, and all may realise.

Still, it may be urged, is not the hope of future reward meant to influence men at all? No doubt it is to some extent. But what then? Hope, however we may explain it, is a powerful fact in human nature, and therefore Christianity, by partly appealing to this motive, does but show how fully adapted it is to human nature. It provides the highest motive of *love* for those able to appreciate it; the lower motive of *hope* of future reward for the many who would not be reached by the former; and, it may be added, the still

lower motive of *fear* of future punishment for those who could not be otherwise influenced. This objection; then, as to selfishness is quite untenable.

(D). CHRISTIANITY AND OTHER RELIGIONS.

We have lastly to consider the relation in which Christianity stands to other religions ; and this is the more important because an argument said to be adverse to Christianity is derived from their *comparative study*. In far more ancient religions, it is alleged, we find similar doctrines to those of the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Atonement. These are, in fact, mere revivals of doctrines once common in various countries : and this is fatal to the claim of Christianity to be the one and only true Religion.

But as to the doctrine of the *Trinity*, it is really unique. Many other religions had three gods, a kind of triad ; but this was merely a form of Polytheism. And though these gods were often addressed indiscriminately by the same titles, there does not appear to have been anything resembling the Christian idea of the Triune God:

Next, as to the *Incarnation*. This is said to resemble similar doctrines of other ancient religions, more especially the incarnation of *Krishna*, since in this case, besides the main fact of Krishna being believed to be an incarnation of the supreme god Vishnu, he is recorded to have worked various miracles similar to those of Christ, and to have claimed an equally absolute devotion from his followers. Most critics, however, now place these legends some centuries later than the Christian era ; and considering the early spread of

Christianity in India, and the similarity in name between Krishna and Christ, they may be only distorted versions of the Gospel story. •

But even were they earlier than Christianity, it would still seem impossible for them to have influenced it. Not only is there the geographical difficulty—India being many hundreds of miles from Palestine, and with little communication between them—but there is a still greater moral difficulty. For the miracles and occasional lofty teaching of Krishna are associated all along with a most immoral character. In the Gospels, on the other hand, they occur among suitable antecedents and suitable consequents; they form perfect parts of a perfect whole. A single example will illustrate this difference. In the Purana, Krishna is related to have healed a deformed woman, almost identical with the story in Luke 13. But it is added he made her beautiful as well as whole, and subsequently spent the night with her in immorality. Few will contend that this was the origin of the Gospel story; and it is but one instance out of many.¹

Any resemblance, then, there may be between the Incarnation of Krishna and that of Christ cannot be due to Christianity having borrowed from the earlier religion. A far better explanation is to be found in the fact that man has almost always believed that God takes an interest in his welfare. And this inherent belief has naturally led him to imagine an incarnation, since this was the most fitting method by which God could make Himself known to man. And then this

¹ Transactions of Victoria Institute, vol. xxi., p. 169.

supposed incarnation was of course attended by various miracles of healing, somewhat similar to those of Christ, though often mixed up with immoral ideas, from which the Christian doctrine is entirely free.

Lastly, as to the doctrine of the *Atonement*, especially the mediatorial character of Christ. This also is said to resemble far more ancient legends. Thus in Babylonia there was the supreme god Ea and his son Merodach, who was the mediator between God and man, and to whom men offered their prayers, which he presented to his father. But perhaps the most striking resemblance is with the *Horus* myth of ancient Egypt.

Now, although this doctrine, like most others in the Egyptian religion, is very confused, the leading idea seems to have been that Horus was the only son of the supreme god Osiris, and came on earth long ago, before the time of man. He was always looked upon as the champion of right against wrong, and nothing but lofty and noble actions are ascribed to him. With regard to mankind, he became their deliverer and justifier. The soul after death was supposed to pass through a sort of Purgatory, where various dangers were overcome by the help of Horus, and finally, when judged before Osiris, he interceded for the faithful soul and ensured its salvation. And what makes the resemblance to Christianity all the more striking are the titles ascribed to Horus. Thus he is called the *Only Begotten Son of the Father*, the *Word of the Father*, the *Justifier of the Righteous*, the *Eternal King*, etc. But the titles of Horus are almost infinite in number, and very contradictory, and therefore, while some of

them bear such a striking resemblance to those of Christ, others do not ; while many of them are also applied to the other gods.¹ •

But still this does not affect the mediatorial character of Horus, which undoubtedly bears a strong resemblance to that of Christ. But what is the cause of this similarity ? Not surely that the Christian doctrine was founded on that of Horus. The whole origin of Christianity negatives such a view. As in the previous case, there is another and far better solution. For what was the origin of the Egyptian doctrine itself ? It was simply this. The ancient Egyptians were deeply impressed with a sense of the *justice* of God ; the *immortality* of man ; his *responsibility*, involving a future judgment ; and his *sinfulness*, which naturally led him to long for some mediator with the just Judge he would have to face hereafter. Given these four ideas — and they are all elementary principles of Natural Theology — and Horus was merely an imaginary being, whom the Egyptians invented to satisfy them. And therefore, if these ideas are true and if Christianity is the true religion which really does satisfy them, that Horus should to some extent resemble Christ was inevitable. Thus, the Horus myth only proves how deeply rooted in the human mind is the idea of a *mediator* between God and man.

Now what general conclusion can be drawn from all this ? It is scarcely conceivable that the early Christians founded their Religion upon a careful piecing together of fables from India, Egypt, and elsewhere.

¹ Transactions of Victoria Institute, vol. xii., p. 52.

And it must be remembered, the doctrines of the Incarnation and the Atonement were not slowly evolved, but were essential features in Christianity from the very first. They are both strongly emphasised in the admittedly genuine Epistles of St. Paul. These earlier fables, then, can only be looked upon as accidental or designed foreshadowings of Christianity. In the former case, they prove nothing either way ; in the latter, they afford additional evidence in its favour.

Moreover, while admitting these resemblances, we must not forget the *uniqueness* of Christianity. For it alone of all religions seems to offer anything like an adequate solution of the great problems of life, which we glanced at near the end of the last chapter. And these are questions which have always interested mankind, and all religions have tried to solve them, and yet the only solution worth considering is that of Christianity.

We have still one other objection to consider under this head. It is said that religion, after all, is merely a matter of *race* and *climate*, like the colour of one's skin ; and that the most ardent advocate of Christianity, had he been born in Arabia or Tibet, would be just as convinced of Mahometanism or Buddhism. And therefore, it is urged, all religions are equally true or false. But the fallacy of this objection is obvious, for it applies equally well to other subjects. Take astronomy, for instance. A man living in Europe is convinced that the earth goes round the sun ; but had he lived in Tibet, he might be equally convinced that the sun goes

round the earth ; and had he lived elsewhere, that the sun was a living being which had to be worshipped. But this does not show that all these theories are equally true or false. The European astronomer is convinced, and rightly so, that his theory is the only true one, and confidently looks forward to the time when it will be universally accepted. In the same way, the Christian is convinced that his Religion is the only true one, and, as shown in the last chapter, confidently looks forward to the time when it will be the only one recognised.

Moreover, this objection does not account for the *founding* of a religion at all. When Christianity was first preached, it was not a matter of race and climate for men to accept it ; and even now it is only partly true. No doubt a man who has been brought up a Christian does believe it at first because he is told to ; but it is the same with regard to other kinds of knowledge. In science, for instance, a man has often to take its principles on trust to start with, and then, by gradually applying them to various facts, he arrives at an independent conviction of their truth. And so in regard to Christianity. Its doctrines are first received on authority ; then comes the period of *experience*, when they are found to explain the various facts of life ; and lastly, the rational conviction. Take, for example, the subject of prayer. Probably most men who believe in the efficacy of prayer did so at first because they were taught it. Then came the period of experience, when they found that, as a matter of fact, their prayers were answered ; and lastly, the

rational conviction. And it is the same with other subjects. This objection, then, is quite untenable.

On the whole, then, it is evident that the *comparative study* of religions, so far from being adverse to Christianity, is distinctly in its favour; for it shows, as nothing but a comparative study could show, its striking superiority. Human nature is always the same, and in so far as other religions have satisfied human nature, they have resembled Christianity; while, on the other hand, Christianity differs from them in being free from their various absurdities and contradictions, as well as from their tendency to degenerate, and having instead a moral character of admitted excellence, and powerful evidence by which to establish its actual truth. In short, other religions are *human*, and therefore, as man is a mixture of good and evil, they contain some good (what we now call Natural Religion) and some evil. But Christianity is *super-human*, and therefore contains all the good they do, with much more besides, and with none of their evil. This completes a brief examination of the more important additional arguments for and against Christianity.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THAT THE THREE CREEDS ARE DEDUCIBLE FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT.

Only three Doctrines can be disputed.

(A.) THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY.

In addition to belief in God the Father, the New Testament teaches—

- (1.) The Divinity of Christ.
- (2.) The Divinity of the Holy Spirit ; so there are
- (3.) Three Divine Persons and yet but One God.

(B.) THE FINAL STATE OF THE WICKED.

The only possible alternatives are :

- (1.) Their endless misery : very strong texts in favour of this ; its difficulties considered.
- (2.) Their endless happiness : most improbable.
- (3.) Their annihilation : not perhaps unlikely in some cases. On the whole the statement of the Creed seems fully justified.

(C.) THE IMPORTANCE OF A RIGHT BELIEF.

This is strongly insisted on in the warning clauses of the Athanasian Creed.

- (1.) Their meaning.
- (2.) Their truthfulness : they merely repeat similar warnings in the New Testament.
- (3.) The objection as to Dogmatism considered in detail.

WE have now reached the last stage in our inquiry. We have shown in the preceding chapters that there is very strong evidence in favour of what may be called,

and what we have called in a general sense, Christianity or the Christian Religion—*i.e.*, the Religion founded by Christ and taught in the New Testament. We have, lastly, to inquire, is this Religion correctly summarised in the doctrines and statements of the *Three Creeds*? We must, therefore, examine these doctrines again, but from a totally different standpoint from that in Chapter XIII. We then considered their antecedent *credibility*; but now, admitting this, and admitting that the New Testament contains a revelation from God, we have merely to see whether the Creeds are fairly deducible from it.

And it is obvious that, while every precaution should be taken to test the credentials of an alleged messenger from God, we have often no sufficient data from which to argue as to the contents of his message. The most unlikely doctrines must therefore be at once accepted, if we are satisfied that they were revealed by God. And this greatly simplifies our present inquiry, for most of the statements in the Creeds are merely copied or abridged from the New Testament, and hence they need not be discussed at all. There are, however, three doctrines in the Athanasian Creed which are sometimes said not to be contained in the New Testament. These refer to the *Trinity*; the *Final State of the Wicked*; and the importance of a *Right Belief*; and we will examine each in turn.

(A.) THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY.

Now, although there are no statements in the New Testament identical with those in the Creed, yet the latter are merely logical deductions from the former.

For the New Testament asserts that, besides God the Father, there are two other Divine Persons, Christ and the Holy Spirit, and yet but one God.

(1.) *The Divinity of Christ.*

This has already been discussed in Chapter XX., where we showed that Christ claimed to be not only Superhuman, but Divine ; and that this is how all His contemporaries, both friends and foes, understood Him. And the doctrine is also frequently asserted by St. Paul, and St. John, as well as being implied in some of the Jewish prophecies concerning the Messiah (Chapter XIX.), so that it is clear from the Bible that Christ was truly *God*. It is none the less clear that He was truly *Man*, for He suffered hunger, thirst, weariness, and even death ; and at times His manhood is insisted on in a way which might even be thought to conflict with His Godhead.

For instance, He said, ‘ I go unto the Father ; for the Father is greater than I ’ ; and ‘ I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God.’¹ But both these passages clearly refer to His *human* nature alone, for it was in His human nature alone that He was ever absent from the Father. In His Divine Nature He was of course Omnipresent, and therefore already in heaven. Moreover, even here He carefully distinguishes His own relationship to God from that of His disciples. For though He teaches them to say *our Father*, yet when including Himself with them, He does not here or anywhere else say *our* Father, or *our* God ; but always emphasises His own peculiar position.

¹ John 14. 28 ; 20. 17.

While we may ask in regard to the first passage, would anyone but God have thought it necessary to explain that God the Father was greater than Himself ?

Again St. Luke says that Christ *advanced in wisdom*,¹ which might be thought to disprove His Divine Omniscience. But the context shows that this also refers to His human nature alone, for we read ' He advanced in wisdom *and stature*.' Moreover, even apart from the context, if once we admit that Christ was both Divine and human, we must of course refer any particular statement to that nature to which it is applicable. And this explains several difficult passages such as that the Son (apparently the *Son of God*) does not know the Day of Judgment, or that *the Lord of Glory* was crucified ; or (conversely) that the *Son of Man* came down from heaven.² Such texts, then, do but support the statement in the Creed, that while Christ was equal to the Father in regard to His Godhead, He was inferior to the Father in regard to His Manhood. He was thus not a kind of intermediate Being, who was partly Divine and partly human, but He was wholly Divine and wholly human ; or, as the Creed says, *perfect God and perfect Man*.

(2.) *The Divinity of the Holy Spirit.*

This also follows at once from the New Testament. For the Holy Spirit is called by Divine names, such as God and Lord ; he is given Divine attributes, such as Eternity and Omniscience ; He is asserted to be the source of Revelation ; He is identified with Jehovah,

¹ Luke 2. 52.

² Mark 13. 32 ; 1 Cor. 2. 8 ; John 3. 13.

the Lord of Hosts, of the Old Testament ; and blasphemy against *Him* is said to be the worst of all sins.¹

And yet, on the other hand, it is equally clear that He is a distinct *Person* : for, to quote a decisive text,² Christ prays the Father to send His disciples *another* Comforter when He goes away ; thus showing that the Holy Spirit is a separate Person, both from the Father and the Son. And the same is apparent from many other passages, when carefully examined ; for personal actions, such as teaching and guiding, are continually ascribed to Him ; and the masculine pronoun is regularly used, '*He* shall teach you all things,' etc. Moreover, we are told that the Spirit *makes intercession for us*, so He must be a different Person from the Father, with Whom He intercedes ; and also that He distributes certain gifts *even as He will*, so He must be distinct from these spiritual blessings, which He is able to distribute as He thinks fit.³ And though He is sometimes spoken of as a *Gift* from God, yet as Christ is spoken of in the same way, this cannot be held to disprove His Personality.⁴

No doubt the actual word *Person* is not applied to the Holy Spirit, just as it is not applied to either the Father or the Son, but it cannot be thought inappro-

¹ Acts 5. 3, 4 ; 2 Cor. 3. 17 ; Heb. 9. 14 ; 1 Cor. 2. 10 ; Acts 1. 16 ; 28. 25 ; Isa. 6. 5-10 ; Mark 3. 29.

² John 14. 16.

³ Rom. 8. 26 ; 1 Cor. 12. 11. The unfortunate addition of the *Filioque Clause* to the Nicene Creed is a purely theological question, and need not be considered here.

⁴ Acts 2. 38 ; John 3. 16.

priate, since the relations between them closely resemble those between human persons, as they love one another, speak to one another, and apply to one another the personal pronouns I, Thou, and He.

(3.) *Three Divine Persons and yet but one God.*

It is clear, then, from the New Testament, that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all Persons, and all Divine ; and yet its whole teaching is opposed to Polytheism. On the contrary, the Unity of the Godhead is at times asserted with the utmost clearness ; and that this is not done more frequently cannot be wondered at when we remember that most of the writers were Jews, to whom Monotheism was almost an axiom. Now the only means of reconciling all this is by the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity.

And this is plainly hinted at in the New Testament itself, for the Three Persons are often closely associated together, as for instance in the text just alluded to (which is only one of a series),¹ where *Christ* prays *the Father* to give His disciples *another Comforter*. Quite naturally, then, just before His Ascension, He completed all this earlier teaching by finally, and for ever, coupling the Three Persons together, when He commanded that all Christians were to be baptized *into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*.² And this alone is sufficient to prove the doctrine, for it shows that there are *Three* distinct Persons, and that each is *divine*, for who but God could be thus associated with God ? While the expression into the *name* and not *names*, implies a unity in this Trinity.

¹ John 14. 16, 26 ; 15. 26 ; 16. 7.

² Matt. 28. 19.

But this is not all, for Christian converts must have received some instruction as to Who these Persons were, into whose Name they were going to be baptized. And therefore belief in the Trinity was not merely *a* doctrine of Christianity, but *the* doctrine of Christianity from the very first ; the one (and as far as we know the only) doctrine, which had to be preached to all converts before even they could be baptized.

And we happen to have indirect evidence from the *Acts*, that this Trinitarian form was actually used. A casual reader of the Book might think that belief in the Lord (Jesus) was the only requisite for Baptism. But we are told in one place that when St. Paul was at Ephesus, he found some disciples who said they knew nothing about the Holy Ghost. He at once asks in astonishment, ' Into what then were ye *baptized* ?'¹ Obviously, then, the baptism to which St. Paul was accustomed must have been into the name of the Holy Ghost, as well as into the name of the Lord Jesus. And as the Father's name could scarcely have been omitted, we have each of the Three Persons ; and the agreement (evidently undesigned) between this passage and the Gospel is a strong argument in favour of the accuracy of both. And yet immediately afterwards we are told that they were baptized *into the Name of the Lord Jesus*. In the same way the ' Teaching of the Twelve ' once speaks of baptism as *into the Name of the Lord* ; and twice as *into the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*.² The former seems to have been only a short way of describing Christian

¹ Acts 19. 3.

² Teaching, chaps. vii. and ix.

baptism, (in distinction to that of the Jews or of St. John the Baptist,) while the latter represented the actual words used.¹

Similarly St. Paul sometimes closes his Epistles with the shorter form of blessing, *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you*; and once with the longer form, *The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all*.² This latter passage, the authenticity of which is undisputed, is of course extremely important, in fact like the preceding one it is practically conclusive; for again we must ask, who but God could be thus associated with God? If Christ was a mere human prophet, like Isaiah for instance; and the Holy Spirit a mere impersonal influence; what strange language it would be. Can we imagine anyone blessing his converts with, *The grace of Isaiah, the love of God, and the fellowship of a holy influence*? God, it will be noticed, being placed *between* the other two, so there can be no ascending or descending scale, they must all be equal. (Compare the way in which St. Paul so often associates together the Father and Christ, sometimes the one, and sometimes the other, being placed first).³

And as St. Paul takes for granted that his readers would understand his meaning, it implies that they had had some previous Trinitarian teaching, which must clearly have been given them by St. Paul him-

¹ *Comp.* Acts 2. 38; 8. 16; 1 Cor. 10. 2.

² 1 Cor. 16. 23; Rom. 16. 20; Gal. 6. 18; 2 Cor. 13. 14.

³ *E.g.*, 1 Thess. 3. 4; 2 Thess. 2. 16.

self on his first visit. And at that early date (about A.D. 49) such teaching could scarcely have originated except from what Christ Himself had taught. This passage, then, implies more than it says, and needs explanation ; and as far as we know the former one alone can explain it.

And of course the same is true, though to a lesser degree, of numerous other Trinitarian passages, which occur all through the Epistles, including the earliest (1 Thess., about A.D. 49).¹ Nowhere do the writers seem to be elaborating a doctrine, or to be explaining anything new to their converts ; but rather to be touching incidentally on a truth, with which all Christians were of course familiar. Indeed, the very fact of their never attempting to explain or defend the doctrine, shows conclusively that it did not originate with *them*. Persons do not preach a new doctrine without a word of explanation or comment, and as if everyone already believed it.

Thus, to put it shortly, according to the New Testament, there are three distinct Persons ; each is God, each is Lord, each is Eternal, each is Omniscient, each performs Divine acts, into the Name of each converts are baptized, each is referred to in Blessing ; and yet there is but *One* God. This is what the Bible says, and the Creed says no more, though it says it in more scientific language.

And if we like to come beyond the New Testament, the earliest writer whose date is undisputed, Clement

¹ *E.g.*, 1 Cor. 12. 4-6 ; Eph. 3. 14-17 ; 4. 4-6 ; 1 Thess. 1. 3-5 ; 2 Thess. 2. 13-14 ; 1 Peter 1. 2 ; Jude 20-21.

of Rome, A.D. 96, uses these striking words in the concluding portion of his Epistle (only recovered in 1875), *As God liveth, and as the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost live*; and this certainly implies the Trinitarian doctrine. And so do numerous passages in Ignatius, A.D. 110, such as that we are to be established *in the Son, and in the Father, and in the Spirit*; and that the Apostles were subject *to Christ, and to the Father and to the Spirit*.¹ While some years later Justin shows that Baptism in the Triune Name was then, and had been for a long time, in common use.² And this is important as confirming the previous statement of the *Teaching*. And it is hard to see how Christians, early in the second century, should not only have used this form themselves, but have accepted the statement in the Gospel, that it had been instituted by Christ, if they had known that in the interval a different one had been used by the Apostles. And yet if it had been used, they must have known it; for the manner of admitting converts was not like some obscure rite or doctrine, which concerned only a few, and might be generally unknown; but from the nature of the case it must have been well known to all the early Christians, most of whom were converts themselves. There can thus be little doubt that the doctrine of the Trinity, though perhaps in an undeveloped form, was the belief of Christians from the very first.

(B.) THE FINAL STATE OF THE WICKED.

We pass on now to what is perhaps (however we regard it) the most difficult of all subjects, the final

¹ Ignatius to Magnesians, ch. xiii.

² Apol. 1. 61.

state of the wicked. The Creed asserts that all men are to rise again with their bodies, and be judged according to their *works* ; and that then, *they that have done good shall go into life everlasting ; and they that have done evil into everlasting fire*. This latter expression can scarcely be taken literally, since it is often associated in the Bible with another—*the worm that dieth not*—which can scarcely be literal ; and is said to have been prepared for evil spirits who have no material bodies. Moreover, the joys of heaven are also represented by such terms as attending a wedding, feasting with Abraham, and wearing crowns, which can scarcely be literal. Probably we are at present unable to understand the realities in either case, and therefore figures of some kind have to be employed ; and those suggestive of gladness and happiness are of course chosen for the one, and those suggestive of pain and woe for the other.

But the language certainly implies some form of *endless misery* ; and as there are obvious difficulties in accepting such a view, we must discuss the subject at some length. It may be pointed out at starting that we have only three theories to choose from ; "for unless the wicked are to be in a continual state of change, which seems almost incredible (for a state of change cannot go on for ever unless it is recurring) they must finally :—

Exist for ever in misery	= their endless misery ;
Exist for ever in happiness	= their endless happiness ;
Or not exist for ever	= their annihilation.

(I.) *Their endless misery.*

And first as to their endless misery. It would be difficult to exaggerate the strength of the texts in favour of this. We are told that the wicked, or at all events some of them, are to awake to shame and everlasting contempt ; that they are to be cast into the *eternal fire* prepared for the devil and his angels ; that they are to go away into eternal punishment ; that they are guilty of an eternal sin ; that their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched, and that they are to be cast into the lake of fire, there to be tormented day and night for ever and ever.¹ The fourth of these texts is perhaps the most important, since Christ uses the same word for *eternal* punishment as for *eternal* life ; and therefore, though the Greek word does not necessarily mean *endless*, it certainly seems to do so here. While in Daniel the same Hebrew word is used for the *everlasting* life of the righteous, and the *everlasting* contempt of the wicked ; which again shows that they must be of equal duration.

Moreover the doctrine is implied in numerous other passages all through the New Testament. For instance, to take the first Gospel, we read of the broad way leading to destruction, with no hint that it eventually joins the narrow way leading to life ; of those who think they will be accepted at the last, but will be sternly rejected ; of the disinherited children cast into outer darkness, when others enter into heaven ; of those whom Christ will deny before His Father ;

¹ Dan. 12. 2 ; Matt. 18. 8 ; 25. 41, 46 ; Mark 3. 29 ; 9. 48 ; Rev. 14. 11 ; 20. 15.

and of the wicked who at the end of the world are to be cast into the furnace of fire, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, so obviously the fire will not destroy them (and cannot therefore be literal), while there is no hint that their weeping is to be only temporary.

We also read of the man whose condition was so hopeless, that it would have been good for him not to have been born; and of the sin which shall not be forgiven neither in this world nor in that which is to come, and an unforgiven sin implies the existence of the sinner who is unforgiven, and therefore a sin which is for ever unforgiven implies the existence of the sinner for ever, and must for ever exclude him from heaven.¹ And as just said, similar teaching is found all through the New Testament, so the Scriptural doctrine on the subject seems about as clear as it can be.

And yet everyone must admit that there are great difficulties in accepting it. For the *endless misery* of the wicked seems, at all events at first sight, to be inconsistent with the great attributes of God, especially His power, His justice, and His mercy, as well as with the endless happiness of the righteous. So we will consider these points in turn.

The first objection refers to God's *power*. The eternal existence of sinners against God means, it is said, the never-ending conflict between good and evil; and this is most improbable. No doubt it seems so; but, after all, the real mystery is that evil should ever

¹ Matt. 7. 13, 23; 8. 12; 10. 33; 13. 42, 50; 26. 24; 12. 31, 32.

have had a beginning, not that it should never have an end. And if the free will of man or other beings is able to account for the former, may it not account for the latter also? The final state of the wicked, we must remember, is but one of a series of difficulties connected with human freedom, and by no means the greatest. That God could create a free man at all, that He could foresee how he would use his freedom, that He should allow him to use it wrongly, thus involving himself and others in misery, and that this misery should last for ever, are all to a great extent beyond our comprehension. But if we admit the first three, and they must be admitted, the last is certainly not incredible.

The second and commonest objection refers to God's *justice*. The suffering, it is said, would be out of all proportion to the offence. Man's life is brief at the most, and every sin in this world cannot deserve countless years of misery in the next. In short, a man's sin here must anyhow be finite, while endless misery, however slight, would be infinite. But very possibly, being sinners ourselves, we do not realise the magnitude of sin, more especially its far-reaching and *permanent* effect on the character of others, who in their turn may influence others also, and so on indefinitely. In this way the consequences of sin may really be endless, and therefore infinite, and if so its guilt may be infinite too.

Moreover, it is a needless assumption that endless misery is for a man's sins here only. Why may not the wicked go on sinning eternally? They must cer-

tainly have the power of doing so, for the option of acting, or at all events thinking right or wrong, seems essential to free will ; and if we deny them their free will, they are no longer men but mere machines. And it even seems probable that they would do so ; for all our experience of human character is that it tends to a final permanence, of good or bad, which nothing can alter. By doing good, men become good—evil gradually loses its influence over them. And then, when their character is fixed, they will be *incapable of being attracted by evil* ; and they will in consequence remain (and this without any effort or struggle on their part) for ever good, and therefore for ever happy. And similarly with regard to the wicked. By committing sin men become sinful, and when their character is fixed they may remain for ever sinful, and therefore for ever miserable. In each case the man's conduct will be always *free*, but his character, and therefore the use which he makes of his freedom, will have become fixed.

Still, it may be said that to create men at all with the possibility of such a future before them, and depending on the short probation in this world, would be an act of injustice. But then the possibility of endless happiness is also before them, and also depending on the same short probation. And as men are given free will, with the option of choosing one or the other, there is nothing unjust in the results being so tremendous on either side. Anyhow, the fact of a long future, depending on a very short period, is in entire agreement with God's methods in nature, where,

for instance, the shape of a tree for centuries is fixed during the short time it is growing.

Nor does the fact of God's *foreknowledge* as to how each man will act alter the case or cause any injustice. For, as said in Chapter II., it does not interfere with man's freedom. God merely foreknows the use man will make of his freedom. And therefore His knowing beforehand that a man will commit a murder does not make it unjust to punish him for doing so. And the same rule applies universally ; so that although God foreknows that the wicked will be lost, they will not be lost *because* God foreknows it. They will be lost because of their own wilful abuse of their own free will ; and God foreknows both this, and its consequences.

The third objection refers to God's *mercy*. Surely, it is said, God would never punish men unless there were a chance of improving them. But in answer to this we must remember that God's mercy is consistent with a great deal of misery here, which is often undeserved ; so why may it not be consistent with misery hereafter, which by hypothesis will be deserved ? And some future punishment for wicked men, who have been prosperous in this life, seems required by our sense of justice.

Moreover, the misery of the wicked may not be inflicted at all like an arbitrary punishment, but may be self-produced and come as a necessary result of their own acts, being, in fact, the *consequence* rather than the punishment of sin. And there is much to be said in favour of this view, since it is the way in

which God punishes men in this world. Suppose, for instance, a man repeatedly gives way to drink, he will have the natural punishment (which is really God's punishment, Who is the Author of Nature) of becoming an habitual drunkard, and very possibly miserable for the rest of his life. It is the necessary consequence of his sin ; and the extent of his misery will, as a rule, be in exact proportion to the extent of his sin. And therefore, if a man is to suffer hereafter for other sins, we should expect this suffering to come in the same way, and to be the natural, and perhaps unavoidable, consequence of the sin itself.

Nor is it difficult to suggest how this may be. For the endless misery of the wicked may be to a great extent remorse and regret at having made themselves unfit to share in the joys of heaven. And until we know the greatness of those joys, we cannot know the greatness of this suffering. But it will certainly be aggravated by the knowledge that it was the result of their own deliberate choice of sin, after they had been repeatedly warned of its necessary consequences. And assuming that the joys of heaven are endless, and that the existence of the wicked outside heaven is also endless, this must plainly be an endless source of misery. And the fact that it is the same Christ who has taught us (more than anyone else) the mercy and love of God, who has also taught us the endless misery of the wicked, is an additional reason for thinking that the two must really be compatible.

The fourth and last objection refers to *man* rather than God. It is that the endless misery of the wicked

would destroy the happiness of the righteous ; for how could a man enjoy heaven if he knew that his own father and mother were in endless and hopeless misery elsewhere ? Of course, if we deny him his memory, and say he does not remember them, it destroys his identity, and he is to all intents and purposes a different man. I have not met with any satisfactory answer to this difficulty. But it may be pointed out that memory is never more than partial. No one remembers all the friends he has met ; and possibly persons in heaven may remember and recognise those they meet there, without being troubled by the thought of absent ones. And even if they should remember the others and know their fate, they will certainly know their character also, and that their fate was deserved. And this may alter their feelings in regard to them, as it often does now, if we find that one of our friends has behaved in a mean and disgraceful manner. While, lastly, the joys and activities of heaven may be so engrossing as not to leave any time for useless regrets.

Reviewing all these objections, it must be admitted that the endless misery of the wicked seems improbable, but it is certainly not *incredible*. For to put it shortly, our knowledge of human nature convinces us that, out of a large number of wicked men, some at all events will continue to be wicked, *i.e.*, to commit sin as long as they live. Hence, if they live for ever, they will sin for ever. And if they sin for ever, it is not only just, but perhaps inevitable, that they should be miserable for ever. And if so, the endless misery of the wicked does not reflect on either the power,

justice, or mercy of God, and, as said above, is certainly not incredible.

(2). *Their endless happiness.* *

We pass on now to the next theory, that of their *endless happiness*. This is often called *Universalism*, and means that, after some suitable punishment, all the wicked will be finally reconciled to God, and in popular language, go to heaven. And there are several texts which are more or less in favour of this view.¹ The strongest is perhaps where it is said that God is the Saviour of all men, *specially* of them that believe ; thus implying that He is also, though in a lesser degree, the Saviour of those who do not believe. But how are we to reconcile these passages with the far stronger texts before alluded to ? The most probable explanation is that they are merely general statements, indicating the final destiny of the vast majority of mankind, but that there are exceptions to this as to most other rules. And the Creed, it should be noticed, nowhere implies that most men will be lost ; it may be only a few obstinate sinners. Moreover, there is this further difficulty : what is to become of the evil angels ? If we are to admit endless misery for these, why not for man ? And yet the Bible gives no hint that the Devil is to be eventually reconciled to God.

There is also another great difficulty, for we cannot think that the wicked will be allowed to go on sinning in heaven, so they must finally cease to commit sin. Many will no doubt do this voluntarily, and their case

¹ E.g., Col. 1. 20 ; 1 Tim. 4. 10 ; 1 John 2. 2 ; Rev. 5. 13.

presents little difficulty ; but what about the remainder? If they *must* finally forsake sin, whether they like it or not, it destroys their free will, and leads to *compulsory goodness*, which is very like a contradiction in terms. For goodness cannot be ascribed to mere machines without free will, which only act under compulsion ; and yet on this theory the men would be nothing more. In fact, the wicked *men* would in reality have been destroyed, and a good piece of mechanism created instead ; and this scarcely seems a probable theory.

(3). *Their annihilation.*

Lastly, as to the other and only possible alternative, the *annihilation* or final destruction of the wicked. This may be more accurately described as their failure to obtain everlasting life. Immortality is here regarded not as the attribute of all men, but as being *conditional* on a man's fulfilling certain duties and developing a certain character in this life. And the wicked, not having done this, will eventually be destroyed and cease to exist. Numerous texts can be quoted in favour of this theory.¹ And it is also supported by the analogy of nature : for if an organism or a species is a failure, it eventually *ceases to be*. It is not kept alive for ever as a disfigurement to the world.

This theory, no doubt, presents less moral difficulties than either of the others, but it is not free from them. For are the wicked to be punished after death previous to their annihilation ? If they are not, justice is not satisfied ; and while excessive punishment seems a reflection on God's character, no punishment at all

¹ E.g., John 6. 51 ; 17. 3 ; Rom. 6. 23 ; Matt. 10. 28.

for prosperous sinners seems equally so. And yet, on the other hand, any punishment which precedes annihilation seems merely vindictive, and of no possible use. Anyhow, this theory cannot be said to be so probable as to render any other incredible. And of the two other possible theories, the *endless misery* of the wicked seems on the whole less difficult to believe than their *endless happiness*; while, as we have seen, it is also the one most strongly supported by Scripture. And therefore, the Athanasian Creed, in asserting this doctrine seems fully justified.

One remark may however be made in conclusion, and it brings a little comfort into this saddest of all truths. It is that whatever doubt may exist as to the future state of the wicked, of one thing we may be quite sure—that their punishment will not be in excess of what they deserve. They will be equitably dealt with; and every merciful allowance will be made for circumstances, including the inherent weakness of human nature. Christianity indeed seems to emphasise this more than any other religion, since men are to be judged not by the Father, but by the Son; apparently for the very reason that, being Man, He can sympathise with human weakness.¹ And after the judgment, persons will enjoy heaven just in proportion as their lives on earth have rendered them capable of doing so, while the misery of the lost will also be in exact proportion to what they deserve.

(C). THE IMPORTANCE OF A RIGHT BELIEF.

The last doctrine to be considered is that of the

¹ John 5. 27.

importance of a Right Belief. This is strongly insisted on in the *warning clauses* of the Athanasian Creed; so we will first consider their meaning, then their truthfulness, and lastly, the objection as to dogmatism.

(1.) *The meaning of these clauses.*

Before discussing this, it may be pointed out that they are often called the *damnatory* or *uncharitable* clauses; but both these terms are somewhat misleading. For the Church does not condemn anyone by these clauses, but merely declares that certain persons will be condemned by God, which is a very different thing. No one desires their condemnation, but the contrary; and therefore, believing the danger to be a fact, it is stated in the hope that persons may in consequence avoid it. An analogy may help to illustrate this distinction. Suppose a despotic ruler in some island were to put up a notice that anyone walking along a certain part of the coast would be arrested and shot; this might well be called uncharitable. But now, suppose the notice was that, owing to there being quicksands along that part of the coast, anyone walking there would be drowned; this might be untrue, but it could scarcely be called uncharitable. And similarly with the Athanasian Creed. Its warnings (whether true or false) are in no sense uncharitable. They are also quite different from some of the Psalms (*e.g.*, 109.), where the writer does not merely state that the wicked will be miserable, but prays that they may be so. This no doubt seems uncharitable, but there is nothing like it in the Creed.

What the Creed asserts is that *holding* (or retaining hold of) the Catholic Faith, especially the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation, is *necessary* to salvation (vv. 1, 28, 29, 42); and that those who do not *keep* (or preserve) this Faith will *perish* everlastingly (v. 2). This word *keep*, it should be noticed, implies previous possession, since a man cannot keep what he never had; so the verse is obviously inapplicable to heathens, infidels, or even nominal Christians, who have never really held the Catholic Faith. It refers only to apostates—to those who, having once held the Faith, do not keep it; and all will admit that the position of an apostate is not like that of another man. Moreover, there can be little doubt that the apostasy here referred to was not that due to intellectual doubt, but rather to giving way, *under persecution*. For the Gothic conquerors of Southern Europe, where the Creed was composed about the fifth century, were all Arians, and they much persecuted the Catholics. And therefore a statement of what the Catholic Faith really was (in opposition to Arianism) might well contain warnings as to the great danger of abandoning it under trial and persecution.¹

The exact meaning of to *perish* is no doubt much disputed, both here, and in the similar passage in the Gospel, where Christ says that all who believe on Him shall *not perish, but have eternal (or everlasting) life*; which certainly implies that those who disbelieve, or cease to believe, *shall* perish, and shall *not* have ever-

¹ Bishop Dowden, *Helps from History*, 1897, p. 8.

lasting life, *i.e.*, shall perish everlastingly.¹ But whatever Christ meant by these words, the Creed means too,* neither more nor less ; and they certainly need not mean the same as going into everlasting fire, which the Creed expressly limits to those who have done evil. The words would be quite satisfied by annihilation, or even by a permanent failure to obtain the joys of heaven, without actually ceasing to exist.

Combining these statements then, we arrive at the following result : that holding the Catholic Faith and living a good life are *both* necessary to salvation or endless happiness in its fullest sense ; that a bad life leads to endless misery ; and that apostasy leads to perishing everlastingly. But as to what will be the fate of those who, though they have never held the Faith, yet lead a good life, the Creed says nothing. These, then, are the warning clauses ; and it need only be added that it is nowhere implied that belief in these clauses themselves is necessary to salvation, but only belief in the great Christian Doctrines, such as the Trinity, and the Incarnation.

(2.) *The truthfulness of these clauses.*

Having thus shown what the warning clauses actually mean, we have next to consider whether they are true. Now, it is plain from the nature of the case that man can know nothing on such a subject, except what is revealed by God. Is then this doctrine stated or implied in the New Testament ? Certainly it is, since belief in Christ is everywhere laid down as *necessary* to salvation. He is not one Saviour among many, nor is

¹ John 3. 16.

Christianity one means among many of getting to heaven. But Christianity is always represented as the *only* means, and Christ as the *only* Saviour. We have already alluded to one text on this subject ; and we will now quote five others, each from a different writer. We are told that while he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, he that disbelieveth shall be condemned ; that unless men believe in Christ they shall die in their sins ; that His is the only Name under heaven wherein men can be saved ; that public confession of Him as Lord, together with belief in His Resurrection, leads to salvation, and that His Blood alone can redeem us from our sins.¹

And the early Christians acted in entire accordance with this. When, for instance, the gaoler at Philippi asked St. Paul, *What must I do to be saved ?* the answer was, *Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved.*² Repentance, baptism, and amendment of life, would of course follow in due time, but first of all, before all other things, it was necessary that he should *believe in Christ*. This was the great essential.

Now it is obvious that the belief in Christ, which is thus everywhere insisted on, must mean believing the truth about Christ, and not a false belief. If, then, the statements in the Creed represent the truth about Christ, as we have shown they do, then belief in these is necessary to salvation. And the truth about Christ must include His relationship to God the Father, *i.e.*, the doctrine of the Trinity ; so that the warning clauses

¹ Mark 16. 16 ; John 8. 24 ; Acts 4. 12 ; Rom. 10. 9 ; 1 Pet. 1. 19.

² Acts 16. 31.

as to the importance of a right belief (including, we may add the danger of apostasy),¹ seem fully justified by Scripture.

Four further remarks may be made before leaving this subject. The first is that the Creed is addressed to *Christians* only. This is clear not only from its history, for it was composed solely for Christians, but also from the opening sentence, *Quicumque vult salvus esse*, which means literally, 'Whoever *wishes* to be saved'; and this takes for granted that the persons addressed have heard of salvation. It cannot therefore be held to refer to any but Christians, no matter how general the language may be. In the same way a royal proclamation might contain the words *every man*, but they would only refer to the king's own subjects and not to foreigners.

As to what will be the future of *heathen*, and *pre-Christian* races, the Creed says nothing, and we know nothing. Many think that the joys of heaven will be *spiritual* joys, of an altogether higher order than anything we can imagine; and such as are only *possible* for persons possessing a spiritual life, *i.e.*, those who have been *born again* in Theological language. And that therefore persons without this life, such as the heathen, cannot possibly share in these joys (*i.e.*, cannot be *saved* in the fullest sense), just as an animal, without an intellect, cannot share in intellectual joys. But they may yet, if they have lived good lives according to their conscience, enjoy the fullest amount of *natural* happiness, in what we may call a lower heaven,

¹ Heb. 6. 4-6; 2 Pet. 2. 21.

and without feeling any disappointment at not having these higher spiritual joys. But this is only a conjecture.

Others take a more hopeful view, and think that the Gospel will be preached to the heathen in the *Intermediate State* between Death and Judgment, without, however, involving any fresh *probation* on their part; since, as far as we know, man's probation can only take place when he is man, that is, when his spirit and body are united together; and we are specially told that he is to be judged for things done *in the body*.¹ In the Intermediate State, he is not man, but spirit only. And assuming, as is probable, that the heathen have sufficient opportunities in this life for testing their character, those who have *done good* will of course accept the revelation of Christ when offered to them and will thus be eventually in the same position as Christians. But this again is only a conjecture.

Secondly, among Christians the Creed is intended chiefly for *theologians*. This is plain from its technical language, and it seems only fair to assume that children and unlearned persons belonging to a Church holding these doctrines would be considered as believing them, unless they actually disbelieved them. But though a child's belief,² which has nothing intellectual about it, and is merely trust and love, may be sufficient *for a child*, and for those with child-like intellects, something more may reasonably be expected from well-instructed Christians. And this is that they should believe these doctrines *rightly* (v. 29), though this is a

¹ 2 Cor. 5. 10.

² Matt. 18. 6.

most unfortunate translation of the Latin word *fideliter*, as it seems to connect it with the *right faith* of the following verse. It would be better rendered by *faithfully*, as it is in v. 42, or *heartily*. A *heartfelt belief* in the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation—a belief which has no reservation in it, no ‘perhaps’ about it—a belief which leads to *worship*, for ‘the Catholic Faith is that we *worship* one God’ :—is what the Creed says is so essential, rather than a correct, or scientifically accurate one, though this latter, this *right faith* (*fides recta*) is fully described for the benefit of theologians, and to prevent a recurrence of old and oft-refuted errors.

Thirdly, the statements in the Creed are only *general rules* ; and here as elsewhere there may be exceptions to such rules. Of course it may be said that these ought to be hinted at in the Creed itself, and doubtless many would prefer this being done. But strictly speaking we have no right to make any exceptions to God’s rules, though God Himself can of course do so. And therefore as the New Testament lays down that belief in Christ is necessary to salvation, this must be stated plainly ; though we may both hope and believe that God will make exceptions wherever unbelief or misbelief has not been due to a person’s own fault.

Lastly, it seems certain that persons *in heaven* must believe the truth about God. Indeed, we can scarcely imagine their holding erroneous ideas on such a subject. If, then, the statements in the Creed represent the truth about God, and if persons who go to heaven must believe the truth about God, it follows as a

logical necessity that no person can go to heaven who does not believe these statements ; in other words, that except a man believe the Catholic Faith he cannot be saved. Our conclusion, then, as to the *warning clauses* is this, that if the other statements in the Creed are true, these clauses do not present any great difficulty.

(3.) *The objection as to dogmatism.*

An important objection has still to be considered. It is that the Athanasian Creed *dogmatizes* too much. Granting, it is said, that all its doctrines are deducible from the New Testament, yet why not be content with the *simpler* statements in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds ? These were *sufficient* for the Church for several centuries, so why not leave other matters open for discussion, instead of treating them as *closed questions* ? We will consider these four points in turn.

And first as to *dogmatism*. Christian dogmatism has been well defined as *devotion to truth for truth's sake* ; since what but a love of truth could induce men to argue about such questions as the *Filioque* clause ? And truth, it should be noticed, is necessarily exclusive. If I believe a certain statement to be true, it is not uncharitable, but merely logical, to say that every statement inconsistent with it is false. Now on every other subject which influences our conduct, *e.g.*, diseases, science, etc., it is admitted to be of great importance that we should know the truth and act accordingly. Why, then, should it be thought that in Religion alone this is immaterial, and that a false Creed is as good as the true one, if a man honestly believes it ?

Moreover, a certain amount of dogmatism in matters of Religion seems essential. No man can intelligently serve or pray to a God of whose Nature he has formed no conception, and the moment he begins to form such a conception he is beset by difficulties. Take for example what some will consider the simplest possible prayer, *May God forgive my sins for Christ's sake*. Who, we may ask, is God ; who is Christ ; what is the relation between them ; why should One be asked to forgive for the sake of the Other ; and what would happen if the sins were not forgiven ? Such difficulties cannot be avoided ; and if the statements in the Athanasian Creed are their true solution, the more clearly this is stated the better, no matter how difficult they may be.

In the next place, it is very doubtful whether the earlier Creeds are *simpler* and more easy to believe than the Athanasian. To a thoughtful reader it may well seem otherwise. For example, referring to the Trinity, the Apostles' Creed teaches us to believe in God the Father, in His Son Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost, but it does not attempt to answer the simplest questions concerning them. Are they, for instance, all three *Persons* ? if so, are they all three *Divine* ? and if so, are they three Gods ? And the Nicene Creed is even more puzzling, for it first asserts that there is one God the Father, and soon afterwards it says that the Son is also God. And so in regard to the Holy Spirit, He is called the Lord, and yet it has been already stated that there is only one Lord Jesus Christ. How can all this be reconciled ?

And much the same applies to the future state of the wicked. The two earlier Creeds assert the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting; and assuming that both the good and the bad share in the resurrection, do they both share in the life everlasting? And if not, what is to become of the bad? These and many other questions are suggested by the earlier Creeds, and answered by the Athanasian. And to many it seems easier to believe the Creed which answers difficulties, than those which merely suggest them.

And it was for this very purpose of answering difficulties, not making them, that the Athanasian Creed was composed. Men would not accept the bare statements of the earlier Creeds without explanation or comment. They would have them explained, or else would explain them for themselves. And it was to prevent their doing this wrongly that the true explanation was finally adopted by the Church. The Creed, then, was not composed for the sake of asserting any new doctrines, still less as implying that those previously received were not *sufficient*, but merely to prevent them from being misunderstood. All the doctrines, as we have seen, are contained in the New Testament, and they were in consequence always believed by Christians. But it was not till after much controversy that men learnt to express this belief with scientific clearness and precision.

And lastly, as to these doctrines being *closed questions*. They are closed questions in much the same way as the Copernican theory in astronomy is a

closed question. That is to say, they have been thoroughly discussed, and (to those who believe the New Testament) the evidence in their favour is overwhelming. Of course anyone may go over the proofs again for himself, and if he wants to have an intelligent belief he should do so ; but as a rule of conduct the subject cannot be re-opened.

And it should be noticed that the Church, in thus treating certain questions as closed for its members, is only acting as other societies would do. Would a society of engineers, for instance, allow one of their members to construct an iron bridge on the supposition that the expansion of iron by heat was an open question, which he might, or might not, think worth allowing for ? Or would a society of doctors allow one of their members to attend patients if he asserted that whether scarlet fever was infectious or not was an open question, which each patient might decide for himself ? In short, well-ascertained truth, or what is believed to be such, in every department of knowledge is looked upon as a closed question ; and it must remain so, unless some important fresh evidence is produced. But with regard to the Creeds, no fresh evidence can be produced, unless God were to give a fresh Revelation. And, therefore, from the nature of the case they are closed questions in an even stricter sense than ascertained truths on other subjects.

This concludes a brief examination of the doctrines contained in the Three Creeds, and all of them are either contained in, or logically deducible from, the New Testament.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THAT THEREFORE THE TRUTH OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION IS EXTREMELY PROBABLE.

(A.) THE EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

One remaining objection, why are there so many difficulties, and no more obvious proof ? considered in detail.

(B.) SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION.

WE have now examined all the more important arguments for and against the truth of Christianity. Many of them, as we have seen, are of great complexity, and we have often been obliged to consider a few examples only of various classes of facts ; but it is hoped that no important argument on either side has been entirely overlooked. One remaining objection has still to be considered.

(A.) THE EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY. *

Does not, it is urged, this very fact of itself form a difficulty ? Can an ordinary man be expected to ponder over arguments, objections, and counter-arguments by the dozen, even supposing the balance of probability to be in favour of the Religion ? Surely, if Christianity were true, and God wished men to believe it, there would not be so many difficulties. He would have provided an easier way of proving it than this ;

or, at all events, if this elaborate argument were gone into, the inference in its favour would be simply overwhelming. This is a difficulty felt perhaps by some who have read the present Essay ; fortunately it can be answered satisfactorily.

And first, as to there being so many difficulties. Several of these are simply due to the evidence in favour of Christianity being so strong. If, for example, we had only one Gospel instead of four, the difficulties caused by the discrepancies between them would disappear, but the argument in favour of Christianity would not be strengthened in consequence. But still putting aside these, it must be admitted that there are many difficulties connected with the Religion.

But what is the cause of this ? It is the very magnitude of the Christian Religion which opens the way for so many attacks. A religion which claims to be the only true one in the world ; to have been founded by God Himself ; to have been prepared for by prophecies and introduced by miracles ; to be the pivot on which history turns—all previous history leading up to it, and all subsequent history being moulded by it ; to be suitable for all ages and countries ; to hold the key to all mental and moral problems ; to be man's guide and comfort in this life, and his only hope for the next ;—such a religion must be assailable at a great many points. But provided all these assaults can be repelled, provided this long *frontier-line*, so to speak, can be properly defended, it does not show the weakness of the religion ; on the contrary, it shows its enormous strength. A religion which made less claims would, no

doubt have less difficulties ; but it would be less likely to be the true one. If God became Incarnate, no claims can be too vast for the Religion He founded. And to many this ineffable greatness of Christianity, so far from being a difficulty, constitutes one of its greatest charms.

And next, as to there being no *easier* means of proof. It is a simple matter of fact that the vast majority of men, both educated and uneducated, who believe in Christianity, have not arrived at this belief through a long line of reasoning, such as is summarised in this Essay. They assert that there is an easier road to it. They say that God has given them a faculty of *Faith*, which, though it may be hard to explain, just as man's free will is hard to explain, does give them the most perfect conviction of the truth of Christianity. And starting with this inward conviction, it is confirmed, they say, by their daily experience just as a man's belief in his free will is confirmed by his daily experience ; though doubtless the actual facts of life may be otherwise explained in each case. Of course, this appeal to faith is no argument to those who do not possess it. On the other hand, to those who do possess it, no arguments can appreciably weaken or strengthen it. It is a thing *sui generis*, and absolutely convincing.

It may be pointed out, however, that if man is a partly spiritual as well as a partly material being, which we have already admitted, the existence of some spiritual sense or faculty by which to appreciate spiritual truths, just as the body has material senses by which to appreciate material objects, is not on *prima facie* grounds incredible. And this is what faith claims

to be ; it is a means of spiritual discernment, and may be compared to eyesight. It does not enable us to believe what we might otherwise think to be untrue ; but it enables us to know for certain, what we might otherwise think to be only probable (*e.g.*, the existence of God). In the same way a blind man might, by feeling, think it probable that there were a certain number of pictures in a room, but could he see he would know for certain. And just as a man, who had always been blind, ought not to reject the testimony of those who see, so a man who has no faith ought not to reject the testimony of those who have.

Still, it may be asked, why should some persons be given this faculty of faith, while others are not ? The subject is no doubt a difficult one, but it is only part of a more general difficulty : why should any of God's blessing be unequally distributed in this world ? And yet they are. Doubtless if we knew more about man's future destiny we should see there was no real injustice in either case. But the subject need not be further considered here, since, as said above, no arguments can prove or disprove Christianity to those who believe by faith.

But now comes the most important part of the objection. Granting, it is said, that the subject is necessarily a difficult one, and demands a long investigation, yet when we do go through the arguments on both sides, the conclusion is not irresistible. In short, why are not the evidences in favour of Christianity *stronger* ? Of course they might be so, but we have no reason for thinking they would be. In our ordinary daily life we

have never absolute certainty to guide us, but only various degrees of probability. Moreover, in Natural Theology the reasons for believing in a Personal God and the responsibility of man, though to most persons quite convincing, are certainly not irresistible, since, as a matter of fact, some men resist them. And if God intends us to act upon such evidence in common life, and also with regard to the great truths of Natural Theology, why should He not do the same with regard to Christianity? He seems, if we may use the word, to *respect* man's momentous attribute of free will even in matters of Religion; and therefore in His sight a right belief, like right conduct, may be of no value unless it is more or less voluntary. It is to be a virtue, rather than a necessity. And this fully accounts for the evidences of Christianity not being overwhelming. They are amply sufficient to justify conviction; but they are not, and were probably never meant to be, sufficient to compel it.

If, however—and this is a matter of practical importance—they are strong enough to show that the Religion is *probably* true, a man who admits this is obviously bound to accept it. He cannot adopt a neutral attitude, because the evidence is not demonstrative; for, as we have said, in every other subject probability, not certainty, is the guide of life; and why should religion alone be different? And then, if he accepts it, he is obviously bound to try and live accordingly, no matter what the sacrifice may be; for Christianity, if it is worth anything, is worth everything. Such tremendous truths cannot be half acted on if believed,

any more than they can be half believed ; it must be a case of all for all.

Lastly, it may be pointed out that though perhaps the evidences of Christianity are not so strong as we should expect, they are of precisely such a *kind* as we should expect. It was prepared for by prophecy ; introduced by miracles ; has influenced the world ever since ; and in addition to all external evidences, strongly appeals to human nature. On the other hand, the Christian doctrines are not what we should have anticipated. Thus the former are level with man's understanding, while the latter are far above it. And this would be only natural if Christianity were a revelation from God. Its doctrines would be above human reason ; its evidences would appeal to human reason.

And as we should also expect, its evidences exhibit each of the three great attributes of the Deity. His Omnipotence is shown in the miracles, His Omniscience in the prophecies, and His perfect Goodness in the Character of Christ ; so that, judged by its evidences, this Religion is one which might very reasonably have come from the God Who is All-Powerful, All-Wise, and All-Good.

(B.) SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION.

It now only remains to give a summary of the previous chapters, and then point out the final choice of difficulties.

In Chapter XIII. we considered the *credibility* of the Christian Religion, and decided that some of its leading doctrines, especially those referring to the Incarnation and the Atonement, seemed to be most improbable.

This is what may be called the *philosophical* objection to Christianity. All that can be said on the other side is practically this, that we have no adequate means of judging ; and that when we apply similar reasoning to subjects about which we do know, such as the freedom of man or the existence of evil, it generally leads us wrong. But still the fact remains that the Religion appears most improbable.

In Chapter XIV. we considered the *external testimony* to the *Four Gospels*; and decided that there was extremely strong testimony in favour of their authenticity. At the close of the second century they held the same place among Christians as they do at present ; during the middle of that century Justin shows that they were publicly read, together with the Old Testament Scriptures ; while the few earlier writers whose works have come down to us, also seem to have known them.

In Chapter XV. we considered their *internal evidence* and found that it strongly supported the above conclusion ; so that combining the two, we have an almost overwhelming argument in favour of their genuineness.

In Chapter XVI. we considered a collateral argument of great importance, derived from the *Acts of the Apostles*. There are strong reasons for fixing the date of this book at A.D. 60 ; and if so it proves a still earlier date for the first three Gospels.

In Chapter XVII. we considered the evidence derived from the Gospels, and the undisputed Epistles of St. Paul, to the *Resurrection of Christ*, and we decided that it had every appearance of being thoroughly trust-

worthy. The narratives themselves seemed to be simply and candidly written. And the testimony of the witnesses was then subjected to the most minute and searching inquiry, their Veracity, Knowledge, Investigation, and Reasoning being separately considered ; and each was found to be supported by what seemed to be irresistible evidence. So we must either accept this evidence or dispute it, in defiance of all the rules of probability, and solely because of the miraculous nature of the event vouched for.

In Chapter XVIII. we considered the other New Testament *Miracles*, and came to the conclusion that they also were probably true. Indeed, from their alleged publicity, together with the fact that their occurrence was, as far as we know, never disputed at the time, either by Jews or heathens, the evidence in their favour is extremely strong.

In Chapter XIX. we considered the argument from Prophecy ; and discussed in detail the great Passion Prophecy of Isaiah, and the Psalm of the Crucifixion, and then briefly alluded to several others. And we pointed out how completely these prophecies were one and all fulfilled in the Christ of the Gospels, and how utterly impossible it was to find any other fulfilment of them. So here again the choice lies between accepting these prophecies, or disputing them simply because they are prophecies. In other words, we must face the philosophical difficulty of believing in Divine Foreknowledge, or else what we may call the *mental* difficulty of believing that all these coincidences were due to chance.

In Chapter XX. we considered the *Character of Christ*, and found that this also afforded strong evidence in favour of Christianity. For the admitted excellence of Christ's moral character seems quite inconsistent with deliberate falsehood on His part. And yet He kept asserting His superhuman and Divine Nature with the utmost emphasis, and was finally put to death in consequence. Here, then, once more we have the same choice before us ; we must either face the philosophical difficulty of believing in Christ's Divinity, or else the *moral* difficulty of believing that the best moral teaching the world has ever had was the outcome of a life saturated with falsehood and presumption.

In Chapter XXI. we considered the *History of Christianity*, and found that its marvellous progress at first, in spite of its enormous difficulties, and without the use of any force, could only be accounted for by its truth. So here for the last time we have the same alternatives to choose from. We must either face the philosophical difficulty of believing in the supernatural origin and spread of Christianity, or else the *historical* difficulty of believing that its first preachers were able to convince men without evidence, conquer them without force, and found the greatest kingdom the world has ever seen on claims which at the time everyone must have known to be untrue.

In Chapter XXII. we considered the *other evidence* on the subject, and glanced at various arguments for and against Christianity, such as its connection with the Bible and with prayer, its adaptation to human

nature, and its relation to other religions ; but all of comparative unimportance.

Lastly, in Chapter XXIII. we decided that the *Three Creeds* are deducible from the New Testament ; so that the religion which has all this evidence in its favour is the Christian Religion as here defined.

From the above summary it will be seen that there is only one important argument against Christianity, and this is the *antecedent* or *philosophical* one. The Religion itself, its doctrines, its claims, its miraculous origin, all seem most improbable. Thus the objections to Christianity all lie on the surface. They are obvious and palpable to everyone. They are admittedly great, but they will not become greater, and may become less as time goes on ; for the whole tendency of modern science is to decrease the value of a *a priori* reasoning, on which alone these difficulties are founded.

On the other hand, the arguments in its favour have often to be sought for ; but when found they are seen to be stronger and stronger the more they are examined. There are four main arguments. These are of a widely different character, and each appeals most strongly to a certain class of minds, so each is often spoken of as the chief argument for Christianity, but they are probably of equal value. They may be conveniently called the argument from *Miracles*, including of course the Resurrection of Christ, from *Prophecy*, from *Christ's Character*, and from *History*. And it will be noticed they mutually support one another. Miracles, for instance, are less difficult to believe when it is seen that they were to inaugurate a religion

which has for centuries exercised a greater influence on mankind than anything else ; and prophecies become stronger when it is seen that the Life foretold was one that had such supreme and far-reaching effects.

Now, it is important to remember that the actual facts on which these arguments rest are in each case absolutely *unique*. Once, and only once in the history of the world, have men appeared who asserted that they were actual witnesses of miracles, and who faced all forms of suffering and death solely in consequence of this. Again, once, and only once in the history of the world, has a long series of prophecies, uttered many centuries apart, united in a single Person, in whom they one and all find a complete fulfilment. Yet again, once, and only once in the history of the world, has a Man appeared of faultless moral character, who asserted that He was also God, and who boldly claimed all that this stupendous assertion involved, and submitted to the consequences. While, lastly, once, and only once in the history of the world, has a Religion, most improbable in itself, and without using any force, succeeded in conquering nation after nation.

These, then, are the four chief arguments on the subject, and in every case we have the same choice before us. We must either face the philosophical difficulties in accepting Christianity, or the mental, moral and historical difficulties in rejecting it. There is no neutral ground, no possibility of avoiding both sets of difficulties. But the difficulties on the one side concern what we do *not* know—God's purpose in creating man—and may be due to our ignorance only.

The difficulties on the other side concern what we *do* know. They are practical, they are derived from experience. We do know that men will not lay down their lives for what they believe to be false, and that the first preachers of Christianity must have known whether it was false or not. We do know that prophecies uttered at random through centuries would not all unite in a single Person. We do know that even moderately good men do not make extravagant claims. And we do know that no natural causes can account for such a religion as Christianity obtaining such a triumph as it did.

The choice, then, seems to lie between what we may call *unknown* difficulties and *known* ones. The unknown difficulty of believing that the Infinite God, could so love man as to humble Himself even to death to win man's love; and the known difficulty of believing that evidence so vast and so various, so cumulative and so apparently irresistible, could all unite in making a monstrous falsehood appear to be a momentous truth. Between these two sets of difficulties we have to make our choice. But to those who agree with the previous chapters of this Essay the choice cannot be doubtful. For here, as with Theism, our beliefs must follow the line of least resistance; and, as we have shown, however hard it is to believe Christianity, it is harder still to disbelieve it. This, then, is our final conclusion, that the truth of the Christian religion is *extremely probable*, because, to put it shortly, though the difficulties of accepting Christianity are great, the difficulties of rejecting it are far greater. .

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